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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A STRANGE BRIDAL.]

A WOMAN'S MERCY.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE AQUARIUM.

RUTH lifted her face to him, her eyes were full of tears, her lips trembled. "Oh! Athole, I am so sorry, it seems as if I were forced upon you."

"My own darling, what an idea! May fate force many such favours upon me?"

"Do you mean, sir, that you want many wives?"

"Silly sweetheart, do you think I meant that; now be honest, do you not know that you and you alone can content me?"

He kissed her so fondly and looked so good and true she could but believe him.

Half an hour later they hastened back to breakfast and found a table by a bay window laid for two.

"Here, waiter, how is it the table is laid for two only, there are four of us, you know?"

"The other gentleman and lady breakfasted an hour ago and have gone out, sir."

"Oh, indeed! Bring in the coffee, then. Deuced cool and independent I think, darling; what do you say?"

Ruth looked troubled. "It is very thoughtless of Livy, but she is such a child. I dare say they are on the sands; let us get our breakfast quickly and seek them. Our train starts at ten, I think you said?"

"Yes, so it does; but Cecil knows that and will meet us at the station, if he does not before. Eat a good meal, Ru, to keep up your spirits; I expect Auntie will give us a good jacketing."

Just as Athole had settled the bill and Ruth had joined him on the hotel steps a boy came running up with a letter, asking for Mr. Athole Vintry. It was in Cecil's handwriting and very brief. It merely said,—

"Livy and I could not face the old lady, so have gone off somewhere by ourselves to be happy. Don't look for us, for we do not mean to be found. Think the best of this business, old boy, for the sake of our long friendship. I may be bad, but I am not quite a blackguard, though this does look black against me."

"CECIL."

Athole had turned away from Ruth's sight he was white and shaken, a great fire burned in his eyes. Muttering "scoundrel," he crumpled the letter into his pocket, and said in a kindly voice, "Come, my love, we shall miss our train. Cecil and your sister have gone on."

Ruth saw something had gone wrong, but a certain ominous heart-sinking stifled her voice till they were in the train and alone together, flying over the flat country at express speed, then she said, entreatingly,—

"Something has happened, I see by your face. Tell me what it is, I have a right to know."

Athole caught her to his breast, passionately kissing her lips and cheeks, then he said in a low tone of concentrated rage, "Ruth, be my own brave girl and bear up; your sister has eloped with Cecil Caithness, and so help me heaven! if he behaves ill to her in thought or deed I will kill him."

With a stony stare of intense horror Ruth slipped out of his arms insensible.

We will pass over the scene at Yarmouth; Mrs. David was furious, such honest energy

and passion were rarely seen. She reproached Athole roundly, while her heart relented at sight of his evident sorrow and serious intention to help. Di and Ruth sat huddled together one end of the couch, silent and sad, borne down by a sense of disgrace and dread. Di was the first to find voice, and said, despairingly,—

"Oh! I dare not face father without his dearest child; she was the very pulse of his heart. And oh! it will kill mother, they have too much to bear at home already."

"Perhaps it may not be so bad as we fear," said Ruth, the consoler. "Cecil is a gentleman, and must love our poor girl; surely he will act fairly by her; if he does not may God so deal with him."

"Amen," said Rodney, solemnly.

Athole drew Mrs. David aside and persuaded her to leave the matter in his hands; he would go at once to town, he said, and trace them if they were in the big city.

"Go, do not lose a moment," said Auntie; "we will follow at once. Here's my card; come to that address to-night and tell me what you have done."

Athole shook hands in silence, and went out from among the weeping women followed by his friend.

"This is a black business, Athole, and strikes at us both. I could not have imagined Cecil so lost to common manliness. We must take up this matter with all our hearts and make him do the girl justice. She's a mere child whose trust in him should have shielded her as with an angel's wing. Hasten to town, enlist the best skill to trace them, and I will follow on with the women, they are not fit to travel alone. I will see to your traps, lad, lose no time—a train starts in a quarter of an hour."

Athole wrung his friend's hand in silence, and hurried on with a look in his eyes that Rodney felt Cecil would fear to meet.

Months passed and no clue could be found to the fugitives. The tidings had been tenderly broken to the stern old farmer, who, after one bitter outburst, forbade her name to be mentioned again.

Mr. Grace had never forgiven his sister-in-law or Ruth; he said he would not look upon the face of his daughter who had failed to guard her sister. Neither would he sanction her engagement with the false fine gentleman who had called her sister's betrayer friend.

Only Diana—sad-eyed, mournful Diana—was left to be a dear daughter to their desolate old age. Letters from her patient, steadfast lover consoled her a little, and made her look beyond the dreary present to that possible future that might be so happy.

Mr. Grace broke up entirely, neglected their fast failing fortunes, and seemed indifferent to the poverty that threatened their house.

"We have borne dishonour," he said, sternly; "after that, ruin will be but a little burden to our shadowed lives. Let the home go, what worth were it without happiness?"

He would not allow them to appeal to Mrs. David for help; he was unreasonably bitter against the good old woman who was fast sinking with confirmed ill-health through worry. Ruth was with her, tending her with the loving devotion of a daughter.

Athole had never ceased to search for his false friend; he was very loyal and staunch to his love for Ruth. Sometimes she felt if it was not so she should sink beneath the burden of undeserved reproach that was laid upon her.

Winter set in, cold and dull, and Auntie became a complete invalid; her greatest anxiety now seemed for Ruth's future. She knew her brother-in-law's stern, unyielding temper, and knew that he would never forgive Ruth's innocent part in that fatal pleasure trip. So one day Mrs. David sent for Athole, saw him alone, and told him all her fears for her niece's future.

"I could rest content, lad, if she were your wife."

"Then if entreaty can move her she shall be my wife in a week."

"Bravely spoken, lad; you shall never regret humouring an old woman's whims. As to her father, he's a mad-man; I've no patience with him. True, his injury is deep and dire, but why punish the innocent? It's fast-breaking Ruth's heart. If it were not for love for you and compassion for me she would never hold out against his anger. Why, even in her sleep she wails and prays for his forgiveness, and calls upon her mother in a way that would move a heart of stone. She wants rousing; never mind her saying she won't marry you because of the disgrace; get the license, appoint the day, and leave the rest to me. I know how to manage her, bless her good stubborn honest heart."

So a few weeks later Athole took Ruth out for a morning stroll, met their friend Rodney, dived into a quiet city church with a maiden and came out with a wife; a woman white, wan, and sad eyed, but still a wife, and he was absurdly happy to know that henceforth no one could put apart those whom God had joined together.

The marriage was a great relief to Mrs. David too; she only wished she could see Diana safe too, but that was out of the question just now, for though Rodney had been ordained he was without the means of keeping a wife.

To his bitter disappointment the rich living in his miserly uncle's gift, which had been promised him, had been sold over his head and left him in a hopeless state of poverty. Nothing was left him but a poor curacy at the East-end, where, work as hard as he would in God's service, he could hardly earn enough to keep body and soul together.

Reserved and proud he kept his trouble in his own heart, and set to work with a will upon a book which he hoped might win him fame and fortune.

By Mrs. David's desire Athole and Ruth set up housekeeping under her roof; she had no use for more than one room, she said, and though she had a good nurse she could not get on at all without her niece, upon whom she relied by deed of gift the handsome house and all it contained.

To Vivian Damian's intense chagrin the marriage had to be a happy one.

The bride and bridegroom started to spend a week at Brighton. The queen of watering places was at its best and brightest; it was the first week in the new year.

There had been a slight fall of snow that whitened the tops of the houses and made the Pavilion sparkle like a fairy palace.

The hear-frost hung on the trees like diamond sprays, and the hard frost rang beneath one's feet like a sounding-board; and such a glorious sea, the white boyes pranced high, flinging their foamy manes over the cliff.

Thanks to Mrs. David, Ruth had a splendid outfit, so that she made no mean figure among the fashionable throng that promenade the King's-road, the West Pier, or the Aquarium.

Athole was proud of the notice she provoked by her fresh bright beauty and happy looks. Joy seemed to have transfigured her into a perfect beauty.

Long after, when they were parted by a cruel mistrust, Athole remembered that week of complete and entire happiness. They had taken a suite of rooms in one of the mansions facing the sea on the West Cliff, and were content to be quite alone together.

Oh! the foolish happy time when the charm of married life was new to them.

How good it was to see the young wife with shy sweet grace trying to become all at once a dignified matron; the pains she took to make people believe they were quite old married folks, and how indignant she was when Athole hid his face behind his paper and roared at her attempts to be dignified; how afraid she was of the starchy landlady, and how glad when Athole took it into his head to order dinner.

They had been there three days, when one evening they walked arm-in-arm into the large

hall of the Aquarium; a concert was going on, and the place was crowded.

Athole smelt the scent of a subtle sweet perfume that somehow reminded him of Vivian; it was an uncommon scent that she always used and a favourite one with him.

A tiny gloved hand was laid upon his arm and he looked up quickly to see Vivian more beautiful than ever, smiling at him beneath a huge plumed hat of silvery grey; a grey velvet robe trimmed with chinchilla and finished with oxidized silver, made a costume that was the envy of all the lovely ladies present.

"My dear Athole, what an unexpected pleasure. Mamma and I are staying at the Bedford. Pray introduce me to your wife."

Athole looked vexed, but complied. Ruth felt her face flush hotly beneath the bold stare of Vivian's sleepy dark eyes. Then an old lady, very dignified and distinguished looking, took her hand kindly and spoke in a pleasant proud way to her that she could not resent because it was so evidently her natural manner.

Vivian at once claimed Athole's attention by chatting in her bright restless manner about mutual friends who were quite unknown to Ruth.

"Ladies can be intensely ill-bred," thought Ruth, resentfully, when she saw how Vivian managed to interest her husband about all sorts of silly little scandals that, quaintly translated as they were by woman's wit, still sounded a little coarse to this simple country girl who was "still unspotted from the world."

Her fair face flushed indignantly as she heard her husband's low musical laugh as he said his cousin that she got "quite too utterly naughty for anything."

Feeling out in the cold, but too proud to let him see how his lovely cousin's familiarity vexed her, Ruth sat down beside Mrs. Damian and chatted away so brightly that that lady afterwards declared her "a charming girl, wants chic and that sort of thing, you know; but one can pardon anything for the sake of such a sweet face."

Vivian tried to make friends with her cousin's wife, but a strange instinct of mistrust caused Ruth to shrink from her; a strange repugnance made her manner cold and distant. Vivian bit her lips angrily, and a gentleman passing said to his companion, "My Lady Caprice looks vexed; I pity the poor beggar who has offended."

Athole walked abroad with his cousin when they left the Aquarium, and Mrs. Damian insisted upon his bringing Ruth in to supper. Ruth held back; but it seemed so evidently her husband's wish to go that she yielded.

Vivian took her up to her own room to remove her walking apparel, lent her some cosy shoes, and gave her a big bunch of hot-house flowers to fix at the neck of her ruby-coloured dress.

The two girls went down together, hand in hand, Vivian arranged this much to Ruth's disgust; she hated gush; and in her simple, sincere fashion, was slow to show friendship, but Vivian seemed determined to be friendly whether she would or not.

In a handsome room supper was laid for seven. Ruth's eyes drew her husband to her side.

"I am glad you are wearing that pretty plash trimmed dress," he said, softly; "it makes you look so pretty and sweet."

Two gentlemen and a lady were the other guests, the latter a quaint bird-like little American woman, with his quick assured manner so common to her nation. Her husband, a heavy looking man about forty, seemed to live only in the light of his wife's eyes.

Ruth in her own mind set him down as a good-natured simpleton, and was surprised to hear that he had made one of the biggest fortunes on record by a "spec" that had originated in his own huge head.

The other gentleman was of different mould, he had the Greek beauty of a young god, crisp waving auburn hair, severely smooth to show the shape of his fine head, blue eyes, clear as

crystal fountains, that looked inquiringly into Ruth's face. He was a well-known composer, a man of whom the world had made an idol.

Supper passed off merrily; it was a jolly informal meal, where everyone ate, drank and said what they pleased, and were very merry.

After supper Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Damian gambled a little, Vivian whispered with her cousin much to Ruth's discomfort, and the sassy little American rallied her about being a bride.

Ruth felt relieved when Barry Lennox proposed some music, and the little lady went to the piano and rattled away at some dashing tuneless thing, which seemed to afford herself great pleasure. Then Barry Lennox played a dreamy harmony, that brought tears into Ruth's eyes, for it seemed to speak of home. After this Athole made his wife sing for them, and at the first sound of her sweet, pure voice, they all gathered round the piano entranced.

"I tell my little woman her soul is made up of music," said Athole, proudly.

When they begged her to sing again, she accompanied herself, and sang the quaint old ballad she had set to music in the happy innocent time, when the sisters were the life and light of the old farm-house.

"Oh! the broom, the bonny broom,
The broom that makes full sore;
A woman's mercy is very little,
But a man's mercy is more."

"I should like to shake hands with the man who set that to music," said Barry Lennox. "Every note is so true and marks so surely the meaning of the words."

Athole smiled and Ruth flushed up, this was praise indeed.

Vivian then sang a song in a clear, high, soaring soprano, and then they fell into a jolly little chat; the American lady fairly frightening Ruth by smoking a cigarette and drinking liqueur.

Very saucy looked the stylish little lady in a low lounge chair, with her pretty rounded arms, on which sparkled diamonds that might have been a duchess's, clasped above her close cropped boyish-looking head. Ruth was shocked to see that she made eyes at Athole, who seemed to like it.

Vivian smiled and whispered, "Don't be jealous, Mrs. Ventry; Ruby always flirts with every man that is new to her. It is only her way; she is a dear little thing and means no harm."

Ruth nodded and smiled brightly; she quickly got up an animated discussion on art and music with that blonde Hercules, Barry Lennox, who admired her immensely.

That night, just before going to sleep, Ruth nestled into her husband's arms, saying, "Athole, I don't like your cousin, she somehow reminds me of the Jewess in my song, who murdered the schoolboy at Lincoln."

"Ill-natured little goose, go to sleep, and don't try to take prejudices. Vive's a very good sort when you know her, and she admires you awfully."

CHAPTER VIII.

"AT HER MERCY."

After receiving a very favourable account of Mrs. David, Athole decided to prolong their stay at Brighton until his aunt and her party returned to town. They were having a very jolly time of it now, riding, hunting, dancing, as though life were only made for enjoyment.

Sometimes Ruth would sigh and wish Athole and she were all alone together again, and he would take her in his arms and kiss her back to contentment.

Ruth did not grow more fond of Vivian as time went on. She got to like the little American so much that she could almost forgive her fastness and flirtation with Athole; but when she felt Miss Damian's dark serpent eyes trying to read her very soul, a little shudder would pass over her as from a sudden chill, the sort of feeling one expresses by saying "someone is walking over my grave."

Ruth tried to overcome her dislike for Athole's sake, since they were his only relations, and succeeded, at least, in manner.

Ruth's friendship with the young composer grew and strengthened as they knew more of each other, and she was grieved to see that all the love of his noble manhood had gone out to Vivian, who treated him with the cruellest caprice. It seemed to amuse her to make him insanely jealous of Athole, who with thoughtless levity allowed himself to be drawn into all Vivian's wicked little games.

It never occurred to him that his wife would mistrust his friendship with his charming cousin, and "it looked so absurd for a fellow to be spoony on his own wife in public, though they had been married only a month, and as yet his sweet little wife could not doubt his love."

So thought Athole, and he allowed the tiny speck in the heaven of his domestic peace to spread into a big black cloud.

Poor proud little wife, why did she not tell her husband how wretched his lovely cousin managed to make her.

One morning Vivian put on her dark sealskin coat and bonnet, tied a thick gossamer veil over her face, and slipped out before her mother awoke. By the way she consulted her watch, it was evident she had an appointment.

She called a fly and ordered the man to drive to Charlotte-street, and alighted before a handsome house. Just as her hand was on the knocker, the door was opened by a gentleman, who uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure at sight of her?

He was a rather handsome specimen of the chosen people, dark and decided looking, with a crafty pair of far-seeing eyes and an insidious smile.

"My dear young lady, how glad I am I had not started. I was just off for town. Come in."

He led her into a handsomely fitted private office, placed a chair for her and stood, hat in hand, waiting to hear her pleasure.

"Have you succeeded, Mr. Somers?"

"Beyond my most sanguine hopes. The Grange Farm is yours. I don't mean to say it is worth the price it cost, which was a stiff figure, I fancy."

"No matter, I can afford it. What of Cecil Caithness; have you traced him?"

"Yes, traced him to Salisbury; he has put that pretty girl he ran off with into a cosy little place called 'Sweetbriar Lodge,' on Milford Hill. I have got every scrap of paper that is afloat of his; you have but to put out your hand and crush him, for that old fellow, his uncle, is sick in the south of France, and refuses even to hear from him."

As he spoke of crushing, the lawyer held out his handsome white hand, on which a rare rose diamond glittered, in a stealthy manner infinitely revolting.

Vivian smiled contentedly, but the smile changed to a look of proud reserve when he bent towards her, and said, in a soft smooth voice,—

"I wonder why you hate these people so."

"That is a matter that cannot concern you, Mr. Abel Somers. I will wish you good morning."

"Nay, permit me to walk back to your hotel with you."

He had followed her to the door as he spoke, and she saw something in his black eyes that caused her to check the quick denial that rose to her lips, and allowed him to walk on by her side in silence.

They walked down the Marine Parade together, and just by Brill's ran against Athole, who, with a couple of dogs, was walking swiftly in the opposite direction.

At sight of his cousin and her escort Athole's face flushed darkly; lifting his hat stiffly, he said,—

"You are out early, Miss Damian."

Vivian held out her hand nervously, and Abel Somers stood back with an evil smile on his coarse lips.

"I will return with you, Vive; dismiss that

fellow. You must be mad to be seen with him," said Athole, under his breath.

Vivian flashed an angry look at him, but seeing the smouldering fire in his eyes she thought it best to obey, so holding out her hand, with a sweet smile, she said,—

"I need not detain you longer, Mr. Somers, I am afraid as it is you will miss your train through me. I breakfast with my cousin, so I will return with him."

Abel Somers smiled darkly, bowed low, and walked swiftly round into East-street. Then Vivian said,—

"Mr. Somers does business for me sometimes; I met him just now by accident; but what is there against the man?"

"Everything—he is a cad, a blackleg. Why only yesterday some men in our set refused to play at the same board with him. Drop the man at once; he is not to be trusted in any capacity, though, I confess, he's cute on 'Change.'"

"I am glad you told me," said Vivian; "but as to knowing him in town, of course, that's quite different. Sea-side acquaintances are like travelling friendships, dropped directly one gets home. How is Ruth? Mrs. Johnson and I want her to go with us to Brill's presently; can she swim?"

"No, I wish she could," said Athole, his thoughts reverting to the leaky boat at Yarmouth.

"I should be pleased to teach her," said Vivian; "I think every woman should know how to swim."

They had been walking briskly, and were now past the Pier and near the Bedford.

"Come on with me to breakfast, Vive; don't make yourself a fibber. Ru will be pleased to see you; I am afraid she finds breakfast a very prosy affair with me, I must read my paper."

Vivian went willingly, for breakfast was a dull meal, and she felt in need of company.

They found Ruth looking fresh and sweet in a dress of warm white serge, relieved by some handsome silver jewellery and a bunch of crimson asters at her neck.

The wintry sun lighted up every graceful curve of her superb form, flashed on the silver buckled shoes, and shone on the burnished waves of her bronze hair.

Vivian, whose rare strange beauty looked best by candle-light, felt herself fade and pale before this girl-woman, who looked like a pure fresh spirit of dawn.

Athole smiled into his wife's reproachful eyes, she never seemed alone with him now, and was vexed to find that the first and, to her, most enjoyable meal of the day was to be shared by the one woman in the world she heartily disliked.

During the meal it was arranged Ruth should accompany Vive and the American belle to Brill's to learn to swim.

"I have a white serge bathing-dress I can lend you, Mrs. Ventry," said Vivian, as she took leave, "so you need not bother about getting one."

About noon they met as appointed at the baths. Vivian, in a jersey suit of pale blue that fitted close to her supple shape, stood in the water trying to tempt Ruth to be courageous.

Miss Damian looked very lovely, her cheeks were ablaze, her eyes sparkled beneath the oilskin jockey-cap covered with washing silk that protected the smooth ropes of high coiled hair.

Ruth with her rounded limbs bare sat nursing one of her rosy-soled feet, and protesting against the plunge Vivian desired her to take.

The little American stood in a poppy-coloured swimming dress, smoking a cigarette, and chaffing as only an American woman can or dare chaff. Her slim little feet were crossed, and as she spoke she put one foot against Ruth's dimpled shoulders, and with the strength of a young athlete, pushed her gently in.

Vivian laughed at the horror of Ruth's looks as she stood in the water breast high. Mrs. Johnson skipped in after them, and began to frisk and frolic like a lively young eel.

By degrees they persuaded Ruth to be brave; and then gave her a few lessons in swimming. Vivian swam like a fish, and managed to make Ruth comprehend all that was required.

La belle Americaine got gossiping with an acquaintance at the shallow end of the bath, and Vivian guided Ruth's first feat of courage.

Vivian had been struck afresh by Ruth's perfect beauty, her blood was on fire with jealousy of her. A fiendish light of wild impulse blazed out of her dusky eyes, a murderous thought flashed through her perverted mind.

What if she had the power to still those rosy lovely limbs for ever; what if she could snatch all that witching womanhood from the embrace of the man she loved; the man who had cast her love back as a thing of so little worth that he had not been aware of its possession?

Would he always be as cold to her, she wondered, if this woman who had won him were lost to him for ever?

Her face grew ghastly grey, her eyes dilated like liquid stars, her breath came in great cruel gasps.

Ruth raised above the water a smooth white hand from which she had removed all her rings but the golden symbol of wifehood. The light seemed to concentrate upon the glittering hand and mock Vivian with its holy meaning.

A sudden rage roused all the demon in Vivian, it was the work of a moment to snatch her hand away and press the lovely struggling body below the water; it was deep just there, and Vivian's feet were pressed upon Ruth's white flesh, and outside in the frosty sunshine the husband who loved her, smoked and strolled by Barry's side, humming little snatches of the waltz the town band was playing.

(To be continued).

WONDERFUL BIRDS.

A GENTLEMAN by the name of Carpenter has told us about a talking robin. This bird was captured while young by a pet dog, and after recovery from his fright was domesticated. He not only imitated the notes of canary birds, but learned to whistle from his mistress. He learned to speak the words "Pretty Bobby," the pet name by which he had long been called.

It having been found that he imitated those words, the formula was changed to "Sweet Bobbie," which he imitated very distinctly; and he learned to utter, though not quite so distinctly, the phrase "Pretty little fellow."

The gentleman vouching for the truth of this statement is a strong advocate of the theory that birds can communicate with each other by language.

Many also believe that birds have a sense of humour. We can show that at least one bird enjoyed a practical joke.

When the *Challenger* stopped at the port of Bahia, Brazil, according to Sir C. W. Thomson's statement in his book on the voyage, some of the passengers went to Santo Amaro, a town about twenty miles distant. There a new line of tramway had recently been built, with a sharp incline to a steamboat wharf. Dr. Thomson's party arrived in season to take the trial trip on the new tramway.

As the truck that carried the party went down the incline, the agonized cries of a child, followed by low moans, were heard apparently from beneath the wheels.

Instantly the brake was applied, and the truck stopped with a sudden jerk. The scientific party jumped out, and looked around and under the truck in vain. A lot of swarthy native children stood near the rails, looking on vaguely and curiously, but not as if anything had happened to any of their number.

When the passengers, mystified, returned to their seats, a parrot, hanging in a cage on the truck, burst into a loud, mocking laugh, and was at once recognized as the performer in the previous screaming and moaning. The observations in Bahian patois, thereupon addressed by the truck-drivers to the parrot, included some very vigorous language.

STRAYED AWAY.

A STORY OF A LOVE.

CHAPTER III.

TEMPTATION.

FAULKLAND took the boat to shore in time to have a leisurely ramble with Fanny before the dinner hour. They lingered by a gate in the old park, under the golden sunshine, and Percy talked to her in a tone of dreamy tenderness, very pleasant to her heart. She had never passed a happier day.

She had been out for the day with Fred Crosby, now and then. On Sunday and Monday, after the workmen's fashion, they had gone per steamboat to Gravesend, and dined on board, or in the dining-room at Rosherville, and they had carried home calico bags of shrimps as mementos of their visit; but Fanny had not enjoyed herself as she did now. Fred was a mechanic, and was proud of being one. He called the waiter "old chap," and interlarded his conversation with such phrases as "now then; look here, you know;" and "that's the style," or, "it's the finest thing out"—all of which, though very harmless, Fanny felt would be unpardonable sins in Mr. Falkland's eye.

Percy was dignified in the presence of the attendants; they seemed to obey his gestures rather than his words. He said "Thanks," with an air of grace, and delicately led her out of little difficulties by preceding her in the use of rose water, and the proper duties of finger-glasses. They dined in a cosy room overlooking the water, and dessert was served on a table near the window, by Percy's desire. He tempted Fanny with deliciously enticing liqueurs and seductive wines, and rattled on with gay, poetic sentiment till the golden twilight came. Fanny was waited upon like a princess by a smart chambermaid, who confused her by too much assiduity, and when they left, a whole regiment of waiters bowed them out of the hall.

They did not go early. They sat at the open window, and the cool, fresh breeze came in. They were quite alone, and even the sound of passing footsteps fell softly on carpeted passage or stair. Percy ordered tea at dusk, and sighed as he gave the order for the gas to be lighted.

"It is like breaking a spell," he said, "for this is the dreamer's time—the lover's hour. Do you wish for lights, or shall we remain as we are for a little while?"

"As we are. It is very quiet—very pleasant, this."

So it was. The first faint stars were twinkling. There were moonbeams slanting like shafts of silver in the stream; and now and then a boat glided past with no more noise than that made when the water rippled under the measured sweep of the oars. The beauty of the hour and the scene lent a purity to her face that woke the better part of Percy's nature.

"Pleasant," he said, "pleasant as a dream. I wish it were to last for ever. It seems a pity to go back to the dull reality—to separate you and I, and have all the finer fancies awakened now trampled out of us before we meet again."

Miss West said nothing; but his words had their effect. She did not know how to answer him. The fear of being incorrect or commonplace held her silent.

"We live in fetters," he went on. "Our every action and impulse is guided by the code conventional, and we must do nothing that it does not sanction. We are governed by the laws of a society that, after all, is none too good for its own discipline. There is a beaten track to tread, and we must tread it or beware of that terrible creature, Mrs. Grundy."

"Who is she?" Fanny asked, in the innocence of her heart. "I never heard of her before."

Mr. Falkland laughed.

"She is the mysterious leader of the 'they sayers,' Fanny. The lady with the hundred tongues of flame and venom; the puritan and uncharitable misinterpreter of her neighbour's actions. It is she who makes the mischief; wonders, in a whisper, how it is that Miss Brown runs so frequently against Mr. Smith, who is a married man—how is it that Mr. Shopley maintains such an establishment, when she was told that he was on the brink of insolvency. She will find us out by-and-by; she will question your discretion and speculate as to my intentions—thinking that because we find innocent pleasure in each other's company I must have intentions."

He touched upon a point that had troubled Fanny gravely. What were his intentions? A pleasant harmless flirtation only—or would he, in defiance of Mrs. Grundy and the wide social gulf that divides the rich and poor, ask her to be his wife?

"We live in fetters," he said again. "We are victims of convention. The thing that is and must not be disobeyed. It makes a Draconian law, and measures out our existence; teaches us how we must live, no matter what our inclinations are. It will give you, in time, Fanny, to a respectable young journeyman carpenter, on six-and-thirty shillings a week when in full work, and semi-starvation, with an unlimited supply of small children, when work is not to be had. It will compel me to marry some pretty doll, who can struggle through a French novel, torture a piano, and dress to be looked at—a mere feminine non-entity, whose idea of a home is a house-full of fine furniture, and who would be less my wife than Mrs. Falkland, the mistress of my residence. Such a fate is in store for me, Fanny. I shall be chained to such a woman, and be obliged to seem happy while I dream, perhaps, of this quiet evening—this sweet *été-d'été* by the river with you."

"You could avert such a fate," said Fanny, with a pained feeling at her heart.

"How?"

"A man is independent; a woman is helpless. She exchanges one state of dependence for another—a one state of labour for another. It is very likely that it may be as you say with me. I shall be glad to escape from the workroom by accepting the respectable young carpenter, and as much as I may choose to give me of his six shillings a day."

"Don't talk of it, for goodness' sake; it is sacrilege. I would rather run away with you myself, and risk the chance—almost the certainty, of being cast off by my father."

"He would think himself disgraced by such a thing—would he not?" asked Fanny, with a slight curl of the lip, yet with a cold pain.

"I believe he would give me his malediction in the orthodox style, and he would never repent of it either. He is very conservative. Men who have sprung from the ranks generally are, and he is no exception to the rule. A poor man hates the wealthy till he has acquired wealth; then he detests the poor with all his might, if they are above their bondage. You would never be more to him than the daughter of his foreman. Your intelligence, your beauty would go for nothing while your father wears a white jacket and carries a tool basket at his back."

"You need not remind me of these things," said Fanny, a little coldly; "they are miserable truths that I feel quite keenly enough."

He drew the curtain half across the window, and went to her side. There was passionate, suppressed fervour in his tone as he said,—

"You love me, Fanny, as deeply, as fondly, as I love you, I am sure of it. You will not answer. You will not tell me so, or if you answer, it will be to say that we have seen so little of each other—that this is only the second time we have met."

"You forget, Mr. Falkland," said Fanny, with a touch of irony, though she trembled under his glance, "ours is merely an innocent pleasure in each other's company, and you have no intentions."

"Little, lovely witch, you quote my own words to torment me for my sins. I must have you, if I risk more than ruin."

He had her in his arms before she was aware of his intention, and left a burning kiss on her lips.

The day had not been spent fruitlessly. He had tested her character, sounded the depths, and found her pure-minded and high principled. The faults she had arose from want of training. She went into danger unthinkingly because she did not know where danger existed. Her peril was great with Percy, for she was strongly in love with him; and he, asking himself what he should do, whether the affair should end with this day's meeting—whether there should be no despairing of this fierce, feverish, expectant joy, that was a temptation to him—would he drop the intercourse from the present time—keep out of her way and forget her, as he had forgotten a hundred others?

No. He was seriously in love with her. It was not a good love—passion had quite mastered him, and it urged him on to any sacrifice. He dared not breathe a word except in perfect honour, for fear of losing her at once and for ever, and he could not give her up.

"Is there no way by which we might be happy?" he asked, sitting by her side. "No way by which we might have many such days? You see we must meet secretly, Fanny, for your sake as well as mine. If my father heard we were together, he would dismiss yours at once, and do all in his power to injure him. I am sure—and we should quarrel. I should, perhaps, leave home. I would rather risk it than lose you."

"We had better not meet again, Mr. Falkland; it cannot come to good."

"You had better not say so, unless you want to come to harm. Swiftly as the day has gone, it has been an age of pleasure to me. Hour by hour I have been losing myself more hopelessly. I would not let you know you have acquired all this power, if I were not sure that it gladdened you to know it. Yesterday I planned this holiday for pastime, the mere enjoyment of a pretty girl's company with the zest of novelty added in the way we spend our holiday. To-day I feel as if we have been lovers for years; and, if I were free, I would ask you to be my wife at once."

"And repent it ever afterwards," said Fanny, quietly. She could be calm when she saw him moved. "I have heard of such things before, Mr. Falkland. A rich and educated man with a poor untaught wife. Your friends would sneer at me—you yourself would tire of me."

"A man does not marry for his friends."

"But he must study them. Look at my family connections and yours."

Percy winced. She was trying him hard.

"A man does not marry his wife's family connections, Fanny."

"But he cannot separate her from them for ever."

"He would not wish to, were he kind; but these things find their level. Families are divided in the natural way; the sons marry, and the wives agree pleasantly to detest each other with the bitterest cordiality, and to keep the brothers separate; the daughter's marry, and the husbands disagree. The entrance of a stranger into any family is the entrance of an element of separation and dissension. A man's private circle nearly comprises much of his wife's as his own family. The safest and most pleasant friends are strangers."

"A very selfish idea, Mr. Falkland."

"I don't know. Strangers meet and are drawn together by sympathy. There is no obligation in their liking; they are not expected to be enraptured with each other as persons are between whom there is a tie of blood or marriage. Their friendship lasts the longer for being untrammelled, and, if broken, it is broken with little pain. We, for instance, if married, could live out of town—at a safe distance from our family friends. The length of the

journey would test their affection, and they would not come often."

"The difference between us is too wide," said Fanny, thoughtfully. She could picture what kind of treatment her working brother would receive from Percy's friends.

"We will think of that afterwards," said Falkland, pressing her hand. "Let us be happy while we may; it is a weakness to leave the golden present, and look for coming shadows."

They went back to town late in the evening. Both were reluctant to leave the cosy apartment by the quiet starlit river. Percy planned other excursions before they parted—afternoon amusements and evening strolls in places where there was no danger of his being recognized. He was more deeply in love than ever; his passion placed him at her mercy.

Fanny grew very tired of her home. The maternal eye was too sharp for her; the domestic arrangements did not leave her sufficient liberty of action. She had to invent pretexts for going out so frequently at unusual times, and her mother began to grow suspicious. Once when Fanny was going out in the afternoon to meet Percy in the old place of rendezvous she ran against Fred Crosby in his working dress.

Poor Fred had been treated coldly of late. She would never go for a walk with him. He was quite amazed in the present instance to see her sweep past him with her eyes fixed in a directly opposite direction. She would have gone on without giving him a chance of speaking, had not the lace trimming of her mantle caught on the point of an umbrella that an eccentric old gentleman, in rusty black, carried under his arm.

A smart young draper, whom a long course of counter training had endowed with a certain sort of grace, was the first to offer assistance, but Fred coolly pushed him aside, and extricated Miss West. She had to thank him, though her cheeks were crimson with annoyance.

"Thank you, Fred," she said, not taking his hand. He had been at work, and it would have soiled her glove. "I am in such haste."

"You generally are when you see me," said Crosby, sadly—"especially lately. If you want to break it off, and have got somebody else, why, say so, and I will bear it; but don't treat me like this for no cause whatever."

"Break what off," she said, almost sternly. "There is nothing to be broken between us, I am sure."

"Then you are a very altered girl; for I know everybody thought it was all right with us, and I know you understood that was what was meant. It isn't right, Fanny. You ought to have behaved better to a fellow."

Fanny went on with a gesture of impatience, and Fred made no attempt to stay her. He was proud in his way; and the handsome young carpenter knew that he was a favourite with the girls of Lambeth. But there was only one Fanny West.

Singularly enough, when he reflected on the time that her coldness began, he remembered the scene in the builder's yard when Fanny first saw Percy. The younger Mr. Falkland associated himself in some way with Fanny's absence from home this morning.

"I wonders where she's going, and who she meets?" Fred thought, with a want of regard for the Lindley Murrayian rules that were prevalent in the district. "I have half a mind to see."

It did not strike him that he was doing anything mean or wrong in following her. Fanny might be going to meet someone from whom she was better away, in which case it was clearly Fred's duty to interfere.

"I don't think much of that Emily White," he meditated; "she's flighty, and I don't like her style. Them two girls goes out together a deal too often lately, and perhaps Miss White isn't too good an adviser."

There was no love lost apparently between Fred and Emily. She called him old sober-sides, and said she would as soon keep com-

pany with an undertaker's mute. Secretly she liked him better than he was ever likely to know.

Emily White had been the innocent scapegoat to a great extent recently. Fanny was out nearly every day at some time or other, and Fred Crosby began to marvel at the pertinacity with which his offers to meet them were rejected.

"Ten to one," he said, as he followed Fanny, "it's some half sort of swell she's met with Emily. If it is, and I see him, he shall have a bit of my mind."

Fred did not see him. There was a handsome cab outside the gallery in Trafalgar-square. It had just driven up, and Crosby saw Percy Falkland spring from it as Fanny approached. He saw them shake hands, enter the vehicle, and they whirled past him as he stood on the kerbstone, motionless with astonishment.

They saw him. Fanny shrank back into the corner, Percy muttered an execration.

"Did he see us, do you think?" asked Falkland.

"I am afraid he did."

"Confound him! But he will not dare say a word for fear of leaving his work. There would be the deuce to pay if he did."

"I do not think he would say anything," said Fanny. "He is a very good-natured young man, and would not injure me."

Things were coming to a crisis now. The elder Falkland had accepted a contract for a great engineering work on the German borders, and Percy was to superintend it. He was a good linguist and a clever engineer, and the work was to commence soon.

He had already hinted at a quiet marriage, to be kept secret from their friends. Fanny was very tired of her humble home, with its humiliating cares and labour. She was negligent too, and Mrs. West scolded her well for it. Fanny's pride suffered severely at her mother's hands. No one sympathised with her in Falkland-row.

"There are plenty of facilities now," said Percy. "Marriage is an easy civil ceremony. I have only to register our names one day, and then appear with you three weeks hence at the office of the registrar. There are no old-fashioned formalities of banns and licences; in fact, Fanny, we are almost married."

Miss West looked at him in wonder.

"See," he said, producing a printed slip, "here is the copy of the registration. I went for it this morning."

To Fanny it was a mystery that such a thing could be. There was a contract of marriage before her eyes; her name coupled with his, and obtained without her knowledge. They were to appear within one-and-twenty days at the office of the registrar.

CHAPTER IV.

GONE.

FRED CROSBY did not mention what he had seen. It was a cruel blow to him; but his chief concern was for Fanny West. He knew young Falkland's character, and looked upon her as lost already.

He did not return to work that day, and was severely talked to by old Bill West in consequence. He did not care—he could not; he was so disappointed, so despairing. For the first time in his life Fred haunted a tavern from mid day till night, picking up any idle associate who was willing to drink with him, and seeking refuge in the worst solace open to him.

Most people have a little world of their own—a small circle round which they revolve with the regularity of the earth's motion. Fred had certain haunts where he was in the habit of meeting certain of his mates—taverns in which friendly clubs and harmonic meetings were held. It is odd and hard that the poor man can neither benefit nor enjoy himself without giving profit to the publican!

Fred being out of temper with Fanny, himself, and the world, stopped away from his

usual haunt and went a little further off. He was seen by a neighbour, who told Mrs. West, and Mrs. West told her husband.

"He has been at the Red Lion all the afternoon, drinking with the men on strike from Batleys."

Next to a chartist or a free-thinker, old Bill West thought there could be nothing so unconstitutional as a man on strike. Batley paid as well as Falkland, and he had done very well on Falkland's money. There was something to be feared; one of Falkland's best hands away from work all the afternoon, and in company with the discontented from Batleys.

"It's a case, missus," said old Bill, laying down his pipe, "that must be looked into. No good never came from strikes, and no good never will. The poor can't fight the rich. Them as have the money can spend it or not, as they like; them as have to work must get what they can, how they can. Not as I don't see why working men shouldn't co-operate and be their own masters, by making a capital of their own; but till they does, strikes can only end in favour of the masters and the publicans. For why? the men call a meeting—public-house; they engage a committee-room—public-house; they appoint delegates—public-house; the men on strike come for club money—public-house. You never heard of a strike being conducted at a temperance hall, I'll wager."

Old Bill went down to the Red Lion, and found Fred Crosby leaning over the bar in a revolutionary state of mind, with a glass of ale in his hand. He was rather confused when he first saw West, but he soon recovered himself.

"Have some ale with us, Mr. West?"

"I make it a rule to drink at home, Fred, thank you all the same. I came in just to say I want a few words with you."

"He's come to take you home," said one of Batley's delegates, who had been inducing Fred to stir up sedition in Falkland's yard. "Go with him, like a good little boy."

"Perhaps if you was a little more at home, and a little less here, your wife and children would look the better for it," said old Bill West. "It's very well for you, with plenty of beer and tobacco, talking about politics and never thinking of the little uns at home. I've seen such as you before to-day."

The man was silent. West had hit him home, and the laugh was against him.

"Now, lad, you are coming with me. There's somebody at home I daresay you will be glad to see."

"Not Fanny?" said Fred, expectantly.

"Never mind who. You come and see. What would she say to see you in this state?"

Crosby crushed the glass into fragments on the counter.

"Why, she wouldn't care a bit—not she. She may come to worse with my betters. But—"

"Hush, now. The drink's talking, Fred, or you would not say such things. Now, come along."

He partly persuaded and partly pulled the young man out. The cool air sobered Fred, and he put his hand to his brow, as if to collect his thoughts. He had not gone twenty yards with West before he heard a familiar footstep behind him.

It was Fanny going home.

"Mr. West," he said, with a sober earnestness of tone and manner that started the foreman by its suddenness, "just go on in front a bit, and let me follow on with Fanny. I have a word or two to say to her."

West went on; remarking to his daughter that "it was rather late for her to be out." She was pale, and trembled with the fear that Fred had told of her.

He had been drinking, but she did not know it, though she saw a strangeness in him. The quieter phrase of intoxication was unknown to her.

"I suppose," she said, her lip curling, "you have told father everything?"

"Not a word, my girl," he answered, more in sorrow than anger. "I am not one to make mischief. I hope your own sense will keep you

in the right way; for you must know that he can mean you no good."

"I cannot talk with you on this subject," she said, haughtily. "She had begun to adopt Percy's style unconsciously. "You haven't right to speak to me about it, Mr. Crosby."

"Mr. Crosby," he repeated, bitterly. "It used to be Fred before you got your head turned in the work-room, and went out with those messed-up images. It's a bad finish to your face—this going out with your father's master's men. I meant you well, Fanny. I shall not be a journeyman all my life. There's my father's shop, and he'd be glad for me to go now."

Miss West smiled in derision, as if she could care for the master of a workshop when she was nearly married to a gentleman.

"I am sorry you think about me," she said, to soften him. "I thought we were friends merely, just as you might be with any other girl. I always thought you cared most for Susan Brooks or Emily White."

"Emily White," he said, impatiently. "What is she or Susan to me? Susan belongs to Bill, and Emily White might go to Jericho for me. I wanted you, Fanny, and you only. You know that very well."

"I am very sorry, Fred. I am, indeed."

"What's the use of being sorry? Why not give up thinking of Mr. Percy? I would look over it even now."

"Thank you," she said, sarcastically. "I don't think I shall require your forgiveness. I am my own mistress, Mr. Crosby. You can make mischief at home if you like. I shall leave if you do, that's all."

"As if I would," he said, reproachfully. "They shall not hear a word from me. But I will save you if I can, in spite of yourself."

"That means that you will play the spy."

"No; but I will talk to Mr. Percy."

"And be discharged," she sneered.

"I intend to discharge myself, so that I may talk to him," he replied, with a resolved composure that alarmed her. "I have a good character, Fanny, and there's plenty of work in London. There's my father's shop at any rate—so I am quite independent of Falkland. He shall know what I think of him."

"And if you say a word to him, I will never speak to you again. How can you be so mean, so ungenerous? I am ashamed of you!"

"I hope you will never have reason to be ashamed of yourself," he said, with a sigh, and then Fanny took her hand from his arm. They were at her father's door, and she went in without saying good night.

"Where's Fred?" asked her father.

"Outside. I hope he will stay there."

"The lad is a little wrong to-night," said West; "but I believe it's your fault. You shouldn't play with a good heart, my girl."

"I don't want him nor his heart either."

Fanny, like too many young ladies of her kind, did not show the most amiable side of her character at home. She went straight upstairs, and did not come down again.

"Never mind her," said West. "Come in, my boy. You will make it up to-morrow."

To his surprise Fred Crosby stood in the doorway with his face towards the street, and the sleeve of his jacket to his eyes.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the carpenter, readily touched at the sight of sorrow.

"She will be all right by-and-by."

"Not she," said Fred, dashing his tears away. "I was first a fool to be played with when she had nobody else, and now I care nothing."

"Come in," coaxed West. "I will bring her down."

"It's no use. I have seen more to-day than I shall forget in twenty years. I don't care for anything. I am just about broken down, and don't care what becomes of me."

He strode away almost sobbing. Old Bill West followed, trying to persuade him to go in; but Fred went straight to his lodging, and had his simple grief out by himself. He sat nearly all night with his elbows on his knees and his chin between his hands, smoking

a pipe rather for the sake of having something to grind between his teeth than for solace. He went to work in the morning, and was regular throughout the week, but on the Saturday he gave warning.

Two days before his time was up Fanny disappeared, leaving a note behind to say that she was married and with her husband, but she could not give his name yet. They were not to make any attempt to follow or find her; it would be useless, and only have the effect of sending her further away.

There were wretched days of search and wretched weeks of anxiety at the house in Falkland-row. The carpenter was bowed with shame and sorrow; his wife wept bitterly night after night, and both surmised the worst. Fanny was their pride—their pet. They said they could never look honest people in the face again. Young Bill West swore that if he ever found the villain he would have his life.

Fred Crosby did not say a word when he heard of it. A savage calmness seemed to settle on his face, and he registered a mental threat against somebody. He shook hands with his mates and Old Bill West at pay-time on the last day of his stay at Falkland's yard.

"She may as well be gone for ever as for a day," he said to the foreman; "but still I will find her for you, Mr. West. Whoever has taken her away shall do her justice."

CHAPTER V.

SURMISES.

FRED CROSBY was an altered man from the time of Fanny's disappearance. He grew reckless, and would absent himself for days from his lodging; he drank hard, and broke into the little store of money he had saved when he thought Miss West would marry him.

He did not attempt to get work for a week or more, but hung about Falkland's yard way-laying Percy, watching and following him, in the hope of finding out where Fanny was. Fred had no doubt that the girl was with the builder's son, but he could not discover the hiding-place.

Percy baffled him. He was on his guard against Fred, and led him many an unsuccessful chase. He generally went away in a cab, and for a few times Fred followed him in another. But the contest did not last; the young carpenter proved it too expensive. The rich man found it easy to defeat the poor one when money was the only weapon necessary.

Percy was very kind to old Bill West, sympathised with him most feelingly, and offered to assist him in the search. West was touched to the heart by his daughter's conduct. He had to endure the sneers of uncharitable neighbours, who said "it was just what they expected. Girls who went flaunting about dressed out in that way, were sure to come to harm. They were not a bit surprised. It all came of poor men putting high notions into their children's heads," &c.

"Five-and-twenty years," said the carpenter, with much emotion, "have I held up my head in Falkland-row, working hard to bring up my family honestly, and giving them—one and missus too—the best example. It was a cruel thing whoever did this wrong to a poor man's child, and I hope the Lord will punish him."

Falkland winced at that. The rough old man's solemn wish fell upon him like a cloud, and he was troubled by remorse.

"But how do you know she has been wronged?" asked Percy. "Did she not say she was married?"

"Yes, she said so; but if it's true why don't she bring her husband home, if she is not ashamed of him? No, sir; she's a wretched lost girl, and the man who has made her so is a rascal—a cruel rascal. Don't you think he must be?"

"Well, if it is as you think, he must be," said Percy, seriously. "But my own opinion is that your daughter is too good a girl to have fallen into error."

Old Bill shook his head.

"Do you ever hear from her?" Falkland inquired.

"T'other day a letter came, telling us she was happy, and we were not to fret about her. She sent us a five-pound note, with her love; and there it is put away, because we could not send it back, she putting no address, you see, sir. Where's she to get five-pound notes, if she comes by them properly?"

"From her husband, I should say."

"He'd have to be a rich man to give her five-pound notes to send home. And what rich man would marry a child of mine? If he is all right, why don't he come forward like a man, instead of stealing her away like a sneaking thief? I wish I could find him. Old as I am I would break every bone in his body, if I got six months for it!"

"Six months would be a very moderate punishment for breaking every bone in a man's body," said Percy, with a suppressed smile. "I should not judge too hastily if I were you, Mr. West. Take the girl's word, and believe the best. There may be circumstances that prevent the acknowledgment of his marriage."

"Then it ought not to have taken place—if it has taken place. How can she be happy if her husband is ashamed to own her?"

"Yours is the hard matter-of-fact view, Mr. West. Young people do strange things, you know, for love is not the wisest teacher in the world. Now, I have a friend who has married a poor girl—just such a girl as Fanny."

"And run away with her?"

"Yes. And he will be obliged to keep it secret till his father dies, for fear of being disinherited."

"More shame for him. It's a pretty thing for a young gentleman to marry and be wishing for his father to die. It's sinful, I call it!"

"My friend does not wish for his father to die," said Percy, provoked into a smile at West's sturdy obstinacy. "It is only a matter of prudence to keep the secret."

"Is it a matter of prudence to give the poor girl's mother and father the heart-ache, make her little sisters cry about her, and her brothers ashamed of her? I am a poor man and a plain one, Mr. Percy, and perhaps I give offence, but to me it seems a wicked thing."

"There may be no wicked intention, West."

"But then it is, intention whether or not. Look at our case, and what it has done for us. All the gossips in the street point at me coming out and going in. I am ten year older in a month than I was, and my missus has got no heart for anything."

"I am sorry for you, West," said the young man, sincerely; "but I must say you take it too heavily. You had better believe the best. Accept my view of it, and wait for the day to come when she can tell the truth."

The old man only shook his head in reply. He could not see anything to hope for.

Percy was sorry for him. In the first glow of his own happiness he could feel for the misery he caused the workman, though he wondered at West taking it to heart so keenly.

"One would think such people would be satisfied with the knowledge that she is well and happy," he meditated. "I thought the five-pound note would set them at rest, with the hope of more."

He smiled then, as if greatly amused.

"Virtuous poverty is not all stage clap-trap, it seems. This sturdy old Briton is as honest as the most conventional lover of honesty could wish. But what a father-in-law, if ever I have to make myself known!"

The builder's son had plenty of liberty. He was allowed town apartments, and a liberal income. The elder Mr. Falkland was satisfied if he saw his son and heir at the family residence near Penge once or twice a week. Percy pleaded the necessity of study and the facilities offered by the metropolitan societies. As he displayed continual improvement Mr. Falkland was contented.

A cab took Percy from the yard to a pretty semi-detached villa near St. John's-wood. Fred Crosby was, as usual, on his track. He was

leaning against a lamp-post with his hands in his pockets, and he scowled bitterly at his late master's son. Percy gave him a moment's regretful thought. He knew the cause of the change in the young carpenter. Fred had been dissipated and revolutionary ever since Fanny's disappearance. He hated the rich with all his might, talked of them as the oppressors and destroyers of the poor, and would have made one in any wild republican scheme for the abolition of things in general and the reign of the people.

Fanny sat at the window watching for her husband. He had taken every precaution to prevent discovery, and they lived there as Mr. and Mrs. Percy. They were very happy as yet. Fanny knew nothing of the sorrow at home. Falkland made up pleasant fictitious conversations, which he related to her as having taken place between himself and her father. He represented that the old man was perfectly at peace concerning her, that he accepted his explanation, and believed all would come well in the end.

The villa was luxuriously furnished. There were books and music, and works of art—everything to cultivate the inherent taste of the workman's daughter. She spent her time wisely when Percy was absent; taught herself to speak with purity and elegance, to play and sing, so that she might be fit for her position when the time came that he could acknowledge her.

She rose to open the door for him; met him with a kiss of welcome, and they went into the drawing-room hand in hand. Percy had been a better man since he married. He lost the taste for the wild and questionable pleasures with which he had passed away his evenings before. He could not quite keep from them; but Fanny was in blissful ignorance of the fact that the fair young husband whom she so adored passed many an hour in reckless dissipation when she thought he was at Penge. She had unbounded faith in him; the first seeds of distrust were not yet sown.

One old uncomfortable proverb was falsified in his case. He had married—urged by passion into haste—but repentance did not come. Had Fanny been less sensible they would have been wretched; but she made herself a companion for him. He could converse with her, and not be wearied by a tedious ignorance or want of sympathy. She cultivated tastes that assimilated with his own; was careful to suppress those that he considered reprehensible in any degree.

There were little errors of speech to be corrected, slight solecisms that offended his ear, and he taught her to avoid them. She was a willing scholar. Love made him a gentle monitor, her a gentle pupil.

He found that the tie did not fetter him, and so he never worried. He never saw her brow clouded; never heard her tone complaining. He came and went when he chose, and she let him go in perfect faith; welcomed him with pleasure. Sometimes, when he looked into the future, he was eager for the coming of the day when he could claim her before the world. The only unpleasant things in the background were the carpenter father, the not over-refined mother, the carpenter brother, the boy at the cheesemonger's, and the boy giving away handbills at the cheap clothier's. Percy contemplated with horror the possibility of running against a juvenile brother-in-law with a basket of eggs and butter on his back.

"I might find something better for them to do," he thought, when the remembrance troubled him. "But there is plenty of time to think of it. The future can be left to take care of itself."

The fear of being found out lessened as time wore on. He grew more careless, and took Fanny about with less reserve. Occasionally he was seen with her by his acquaintance, and they rallied him about her, putting their own evil constructions on the association. He had to laugh with them, and so accept the unmanly imputation that disgraced him.

Fanny knew nothing of these things. She

had the villa for her home, and only Percy for company. Her resources were her books, her music, and the small conservatory that was exquisitely filled. There were times when she longed to see her parents, and the old place in Falkland row, when she pictured the familiar tea-table, with all its loving associations, and wished herself with them. But she had to check the wish for Percy's sake.

There was one haunting fear—the hour of approaching separation. The time was drawing near for Percy to start for the German borders with his gang of artisans, to carry out the contract undertaken by his father. He had hinted at attempting to smuggle her over with him; but recently he had grown cool upon his own projection—there was the risk, he said.

(To be continued.)

SWEETEST AND BEST.

CHAPTER I.

"That boy is perfectly infatuated with the little witch over there in the home cottage."

"And have you just opened your eyes to the fact?" asked the white-haired woman, looking up from her work.

Philip Halstead, a retired merchant, and the richest landowner in Silverdale, did not immediately reply, but kept on drumming on the window-pane, as he gazed off across the stretch of low meadow, through whose tall grasses a manly form was threading its way.

"Mary," finally said he, turning toward the other, "I wonder what our boy can possibly see in that girl to admire?"

"Eh?" responded Mrs. Halstead.

"What is there about her that is attractive?" he asked.

"She is very pretty," replied the other.

"Not more so than a dozen other women of his acquaintance."

"She is full of life, has a firm, loving nature, and —" faltered the lady.

"Well, what other attraction does she possess?" impatiently asked Mr. Halstead.

"She possesses the attraction of straitened circumstances, backed up by a good name and plenty of beauty," returned the white-haired wife and mother.

"Humph! a poor showing, I think. Confound — But no matter—the boy's a fool!"

And Philip went out of the room, to find consolation in giving orders to some men at work on the farm.

All the long dreary winter through handsome Fred Halstead had been cooped up in college.

His heart had yearned more times than once for the snow-bound woods adjoining his father's estate. He had pictured to himself the jolly times he would have when college walls and dry, dusty studies should be cast aside.

He is home finally—has been for a period of two or three weeks.

He has found an attraction to console him for the dulness at home at a little old-fashioned cottage.

Some women are born to command, not by the right and power of royal gift or rich endowment of fortune, but by the beauty which God and nature bestow in place of royalty or wealth.

Beatrice Barton, or Trixy as she is called, was a lovely little darling when she trotted to school but a few years ago. She is beautiful now, as she sits by Fred's side under an elm, listening to his stories of college fun and duty.

Fred has met many fair women during his period of twenty-two years of life. He has flirted with many women—as some men will—and now he both respects and admires, as well as loves, this beautiful girl whose eyes have never gazed upon the stir of city life.

The days pass on, and Fred takes his way every afternoon across the meadow.

At last the time comes for his return to college, and just a week prior to that event

Fred comes to his mother, as she is seated in the lawn leading to the lovely garden. He tells her something which sends the blood to her face in a warm tide, and then recedes, leaving the face white and pain-stricken.

"Fred, Fred, how could you? Your father—" "Mother, something tells me that all will be well in the end. He does not know her true, sweet nature. Some day he will, and then—it will be all right. Don't worry, little mother."

"Father will learn my darling's goodness; I feel it here," and he laid his hand upon his heart.

The eve of Fred's departure arrived. His father was seated in the library, awaiting his son's return.

"At this very moment I suppose they are swearing undying affection. I'll put a stop to the whole business," mused the old gentleman.

A half-hour passed, and the door was opened and the culprit entered. His face is yet aglow with joy, his eyes are still bright with the light of bliss. He takes a seat near his father, and awaits for the latter to speak.

"In the morning you return, Frederick?"

"Yes, father," demurely said Fred. He knew for what this interview had been called, and he was determined to be calm.

"Do you leave behind you any tender attachment, my boy?"

"Eh?"

"Do you go back to your books heart free?"

Errol asked Mr. Halstead, as he carefully searched the other's features with absorbing eyes.

"Well—that is, I—" hesitated Fred, casting his eyes down.

"Don't get confused, my lad; it is a bad sign and a half confession. Tell me frankly, are you engaged to the girl over the meadow?"

Fred did not reply.

"You say nothing, my boy. What does it mean?—what—O, Fred, Fred, I hope you are not a base scoundrel to betray—"

"Stop, father," exclaimed Fred, springing to his feet; "that girl is the sweetest and best woman man ever gazed upon. Could I betray her? am I not your son?"

"Bless you, Fred! I feel you are my son, and I know you are a true fellow. One thing more."

"Well, I listen."

"Promise me that you will never look upon Trixy Barton's face again."

"A strange wish, father."

"I have other views for you, my boy. Beside, there are other women, fair, beautiful, more worthy."

"Of that we will not speak," interrupted Fred.

"Some other time then, my son; but you do not promise."

"Well, since you will have it, I"—Fred thought a minute—"I promise never to look upon the face of Trixy Barton again."

"Bless you, Fred. I know you will be cured of this foolish fancy when you come back from your books again," rapturously exclaimed Mr. Halstead, grasping his son's hand and shaking it warmly.

CHAPTER II.

In the morning Fred went back to the college, and the two old people were lonely without the merry laugh and bright face of their boy.

A month passed, and one day one of the farm hands came running to Mrs. Halstead and told her that the master had been thrown from his horse. The door is pushed open, and two of the men enter, bearing between them the inanimate form of their master.

A broken limb is the most serious of Mr. Halstead's injuries. He is fretful for days and nights, and the patient life is well-nigh worn out. He will not let her send word of the accident to Fred, for he says it will only break up the boy's studies.

A slight girlish form comes across the meadows one morning, and walks to the front door of the mansion.

"Can I see Mrs. Halstead?"

"Step in. Who shall I say it is?" asked the servant, as she ushered the visitor into the hall.

"Trixy Barton, please."

Trixy is shown into the beautifully furnished room.

"Child, sit down here by me. Now what can I do for you, my dear?"

"Can I help you in any way, Mrs.—Mrs.—Halstead? Mother sent me to ask," shyly said Trixy.

"Why, you little dear, what could you do?"

"Mother said that people with broken bones are fretful; that they grow tired quite easily. She said I might offer to help you to please and comfort Mr. Halstead."

The old lady kissed her and promised to avail herself of her offer if she could. Mr. Halstead needed no little persuasion, but in the end charmed by her sweet face, he asked her very graciously to come and read to him if she could spare the time. This was the very thing Trixy desired. She had intended to extend her assistance to him; and he has invited her.

"O, I would like it very much, I assure you."

So it was settled.

How Trixy's bright face cheered the old man's face of care and pain. How her soft voice filled his heart with peace and eased his trouble away, as she read and sung to him.

"Mary," said he, one morning, as he was seated in the library with his limb resting upon a chair, "I'm about well now, and—and I'm just the least bit sorry."

"Sorry; what an idea! Why?" returned the old lady.

"The little girl, Trixy, will be needed no longer when I can help myself."

"O, that's it?"

"Yes, so you know I wish I could keep her here always."

"But it would not do," said his wife, watching him furtively while the while.

"Why not?"

"Fred, you know."

"Yes; Fred used to go over the meadow, I remember."

No more was said upon the subject. Wednesday arrived, and Fred also.

"Fred, I want to say something to you," said his father, as the young fellow helped his father to the couch.

"Very well, I am all ears."

"Did you meet any prettier girl than Trixy while you were away?"

"No."

"Do you still hold to your promise not to look upon the face of Trixy Barton again?" asked his father.

"I do."

"I'm sorry, my boy—I'm very sorry."

"Why?" asked Fred.

"Because I have learned that she is a jewel. I would like to have her sweet face near me; her dear presence would bring a charm to the house. But, oh—well, if it cannot be, I suppose it cannot."

"I cannot bring Trixy Barton to your home, father. When I promised not to look upon the face of Trixy again—Trixy Barton, I mean—I intended to keep that promise. Good-morning," and with these words Fred went out.

A half hour passed; the door opened, and Fred, with Trixy upon his arm, came in. Behind him appeared Fred's mother.

"Fred, you said—"

"Precisely, father. I said I would not look upon Trixy Barton's face again. When I left for college she was Trixy Halstead."

"And you—did you know?" asked the astonished man of his wife.

"Forgive me, Philip—I knew all."

It was easy work now to reconcile him to the little deception, since he had come to believe that of all the girls Fred could have married Trixy was undoubtedly the "sweetest and best."

J. M. S.

TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

CHAPTER XXVII. (continued.)

As Lochisla and Hyacinth started forward slowly, she said, "I could not, you know—I could not prevent Gwendolen coming here. She used to think that there was nothing more between you and me than the old tie, but latterly—you know it too, Errol—she has been growing jealous of me, and so if I had tried to dissuade her from meeting you she would have been the more determined."

"My child," interrupted Lochisla, "spare your generous nature, as I will strive to do. It is all to me an open book, and the reading of it is cruel pain. Ah! Hyacinth, Hyacinth, no deeper shame can a woman feel for one of her own sex who stoops from womanly dignity than a man feels who reverences truly noble womanhood. And it is not even for love that Gwendolen so humbles herself. Heavens!" he said, under his breath, "could no one stand between her and such shame?"

Hyacinth's head was bowed; she spoke after a pause, in a subdued voice, almost as if the shame had been hers,—

"Louis would have stayed her if he could, Errol. His passion was terrible when he knew she was coming, but she would not have heeded him. I prayed him not to speak harshly to her, for I knew it would be useless, and only make misery and division."

"You did right, Hyacinth. Poor Gwendolen! she has imagined that I stood between her and Hazlemere, and threw you in his way because I grudged him the love I had discarded, yet still—she tried to think—cherished. She has thought that for her sake I came to London, or she had tried so to think; yet her heart misgives her and she fears you. Hyacinth, tell me, has she showed that jealousy to you in any marked manner?"

"No, Errol; but I can see and feel it."

Lochisla set his teeth, and his hand closed more tightly over that he held. He did not speak for some moments; when he did it was to turn to another subject, though more closely connected with this than Hyacinth was aware.

"Sweetheart, how is it with Louis and you?"

The girl flushed deeply.

"I shall never go back to Stanhope Lea," she said, in a low voice.

"No, by heaven!" said the Earl, so emphatically, that she looked at him startled, then he added, "But Louis, has he—"

"No, no. Ah! Errol," the tears rushed to her eyes, "he is so changed—so ill. And I think, perhaps, he knows I do not love him as he would wish; and then, feeling he cannot live, he would not speak. Poor Louis! it seems so cruel to leave him, and he does not know that I must do it, Errol."

"He does not know it?"

"No, it was Aunt Philippa who spoke to me and charged me with trifling with Louis."

"By Jove! Let me know all, Hyacinth."

And Hyacinth told him, keeping back nothing what had passed between herself and Miss Philippa.

He listened without interruption, though his face grew very stern again at the insult to Hyacinth; and when she ceased, he said quietly,—

"It is best so, my child, best so for all reasons. Have you thought, then, what you mean to do?"

"I can live alone, Errol—at least, with a companion. But how can I tell Louis that I must leave Stanhope Lea, for I cannot tell him why; and I should not like to go abroad while he is in such ill-health?"

"Still, whatever comes, you must not return to Stanhope Lea at all," said Lochisla. "It will be a shock to Louis to learn how it was that you were driven from his house; but there is no help for it. Ah! my heart, if I could but act for you—if I could but take the part which should be mine. Will it ever be in my power to be just to you?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DREAM, OR A TERRIBLE REALITY?

"Just to me, Errol? You must not talk of justice, for you do not wrong me."

The Earl lifted his dark eyes to the sweet face bent down to him, and his look was full of pain, and her's of pleading tenderness.

"My soul!" he said, passionately, "do not tempt me to remember only that to your love there is no dishonour, and to forget—not the shame—that can never be, but that it is a gulf between us that can not be spanned."

"I would make you forget it if I could, Errol," said the girl, steadily.

"Hush!" he turned aside his face. "Have I not to fight my own heart? Spare me, Hyacinth."

"Forgive me!" She said no more then, but the light sprang into her eyes, and almost a smile came over the crimson lips. He feared her then; when the crisis came she would not plead in vain.

In a few moments he had gained self-command, and spoke in his usual manner.

"Hyacinth, I think it would be best to write to Miss Philippa such a letter as she can show to Louis; telling her formally what step you have decided to take. At the same time tell Gwendolen also."

"When shall I write the letter, Errol?"

"In two or three days from now, my child."

By this time they had reached the end of the village, and arrived at the principal inn, where they found and were received "with effusion" by the rest of the party; and even Gwendolen smiled and congratulated them on having escaped the rain; but the mask she wore was not a mask to two among the riders, and one of those two said in his heart,—

"Thank Heaven! my darling will no more share Gwendolen Stanhope's home."

"It was unfortunate," said Gwendolen to her cousin, riding up to her as the party turned back towards Bramblemere, "that Lenore should cast a shoe. Had Mac Jan charge of her?"

Hyacinth refused to read the innuendo of this question; she answered quickly,—

"Of course not. Emma's own groom attended to her. If Jan had seen to her the accident would not have happened."

"Of course not, dear; but 'tis a pity it did happen. I am sure the Duke of Merivale thought it was no accident at all."

"And I am certain," said Hyacinth, turning and looking full in her cousin's face, "that the Duke of Merivale, being a true gentleman, had no such thought, and gave you no cause to suppose he had."

Gwendolen coloured scarlet; but as Hyacinth, after speaking those deliberate words, turned away, her cousin leaned towards her and said in a whisper,—

"You remember what I once told you, Hyacinth, about Lochisla?"

"Gwendolen, hush! For your own sake do not recall such words."

"Why not? He was vowed to me; and I am mine still."

Hyacinth made no answer, she did not even look into Gwendolen's face, but shook her rein and rode on. Her heart sank within her with the terror of what Gwendolen might do or say fatally compromising to her womanly dignity.

She had no thought for herself or idea of any melodramatic revenge on Gwendolen's part; and, indeed, believed it probable that this fit of jealousy would pass away—for a time at any rate—as others had done. And she was not mistaken. An hour later Gwendolen was sincerely cordial to her cousin, and seemed anxious to atone for the bitter speeches she had made; and after luncheon she was Hyacinth's partner at lawn-tennis.

She was strangely capricious, the girl thought; but Lochisla watched her keenly, though covertly, and when the dressing-bell rang he walked by her side into the house, and talked to her, or rather made her talk, all the way.

"Lord Lochisla, you do not deserve that I should bid you good-night. Why must you go to the library now? We would let you off for half an hour in the day time."

So spoke Lady Loring.

The Earl answered smiling,—

"Half-an-hour would not do, nor an hour. Dear Lady Loring, you forget that to a soldier a night's rest is a luxury, not a necessity. I have many a time sat up all night when I might have rested if I would."

"Well, you don't look the worse for it, I admit. Studying at ghastly hours agrees with you, I suppose; so I will forgive you and say good-night."

Hyacinth standing near heard, and her heart was troubled. What was it that weighed specially on Lochisla just now? Why was it he could not rest?

It was long before sleep visited her own eyes; the shadows seemed drawing closer and closer round her, and her thoughts dwelt sorrowfully with the solitary man in the great sombre library, alone in the vast silence of the deep night, alone with the crowding phantoms of years of bitter suffering—alone with a grief of which she knew not, but saw only its black shadow; ay, alone with a thought of dread and horror that she knew not of—a thought that grew and grew till it seemed almost to take tangible shape, and to glare at him from the gloom.

It was long past midnight. Errol Cameron paced slowly up and down the wide room, his arms folded on his breast, his lips white and set, his dark, brilliant eyes gazing straight before him into space. No book lay on the table. He was studying a terrible book, not written on paper or parchment—a book whose language he only and one other could read, and that other was far away.

And there was not a sound; his light foot-fall could not have been heard by any one in the room on the velvet-pile carpet; all in the household, save himself, slept, and without there was not even a breeze to stir the boughs of the trees, not even the hoot of the night owls, or the beat of a bat's wing against the glass. All was still—the deathly, awful stillness of night in the country.

Once he sat down, leaning his burning forehead on his hands; but ere long he had risen again, and resumed his walk, pausing with almost a start when the clock in the turret near struck two, and the gilded ormolu on the mantel-piece took up the tale in silvery chimes. Only two o'clock! It seemed as if he had been here for hours—long hours of agony!

"Am I powerless?" his heart cried out, over and over, though no word passed his lips—"powerless to avert this doom, or is it too late? Mother of Heaven! thou knowest how I have striven, and yet to me it would be freedom, honour, love, all—all! Ah! Heaven, for one moment if only a dream—one moment to know Errol Cameron's name once more held in honour, to face the world free from the brand of shame—to blot out from my brain words that are written there in letters of fire! Is it just that I should suffer—that a spotless name should be degraded to the dust for a sin not mine? Father in Heaven! save me from this anguish, from the thought that her doom would be my release!"

Hark! what was that sound without—so slight that an ear less quick, less schooled, might not have heeded it, but the soldier turned towards the door instinctively. Was it a step in the polished gallery? He heard it again, even as the question flashed through his mind, and ere he had reached the door it was dashed open, and with a low cry, half terror, half frantic joy, Hyacinth Vernon threw herself into his arms.

"Eternal Heaven!" burst from him, as he wrapped the quivering, convulsed form to his breast; and the awful dread of days and weeks sprang into strong, fierce life.

Not whiter was the face of the trembling

girl than Errol Cameron's, as with a quick movement he shut and locked the door, and he held the girl to him with a speechless passion of thankfulness that she wist not of. She was white and wild with a terror that no mortal being could have caused, and clung to her lover as in the horror of the supernatural we cling to the living heart that beats for us, seek the warm clasp of mortal hands, and the embrace of the strong, protecting human love. She had evidently fled from her chamber in the haste of an overmastering fear—a fear so great that it had beaten down all thought, and left only the blind instinct to fly to the man who loved her. She had either been lying down, not having yet retired to her sleeping room, or had had time to don extra apparel, for she was clothed in a long blue cashmere morning-gown, and had slippers on her feet; but Lochisla could not, for some moments, ask her a single question, so terrible was her agitation; he could only hold her to him and tenderly caress the golden head, and whisper soothing words to her.

"My heart, my own darling! fear nothing—no harm can reach thee here; in my arms thou art safe, thou knowest it, Hyacinth—my life, my treasure."

She lifted her face at last, and looked up to him with a look of perfect love and trust, and tried to speak; then a sudden tremor shook her, and she gave a scared, wild glance round as if fearing to see some dreadful shape. Racked to the soul, Lochisla yet retained outward calm, and seeing that Hyacinth had sustained a severe shock he still only sought to soothe her, and would not even suffer her to speak until her mind had regained its equilibrium.

"My child," he said, softly, "there is nothing here—nothing but thou and me. Nay, I can wait for a little while to hear what has happened. It is no light thing, I know, that would so frighten my brave Hyacinth. Rest here, dear one."

He placed her gently on a low couch, and turning aside, poured a little water into a glass from a decanter that stood near at hand. She drank it obediently, even eagerly, and whispered,—

"Thanks, Errol," gratefully.

Then as he sat down by her and drew her to him again, she nestled to his breast, and after a minute or two her breathing grew more tranquil, and the frightened look almost died out of her eyes. She struggled hard for composure—she never forgot in her extremest agony how anxious Errol Cameron must be.

"Errol," she said at length, lifting her face, "I can tell you now—you have been so patient—and you will think me so foolish!"

"Could I be impatient with thee, Hyacinth?" answered Lochisla, kissing the white brow, "and I know thee too well to believe thee guilty of folly. Tell me what made thee fly to me in such fear."

"It was no dream, Errol. I had not gone to bed, but had laid down on a couch in my dressing-room as I am, and I never slept. I was thinking—thinking of so many things that I could not sleep, and I had for the time forgotten the legend of the lady who they say is seen at times, and who tried to murder her rival; so there was nothing to excite my fancy at all. There was no light in the room, and I could only see things dimly. Suddenly I felt a strange impression that I was not alone. I looked towards the door, and, Errol, there was a white figure there—in the room. I had not heard the door open—"

"A white figure—a woman's?" said Lochisla, under his breath.

"Yes, a woman's—I could not see the face; there was something white, like a wimple, over the head, and she had on a long white robe that might have been a nightdress, or anything—it was too dark to see distinctly. She did not walk upright, but half-crouching, and crept slowly round the edge of the room towards the bed room door." As she spoke, shuddering once more in speaking of those horrible moments, Lochisla strained her yet

closer to him, and the cold drops stood on his brow as he bent over her. Dreaming, ah, no! This was a terrible reality!

"Go, on," he said, hoarsely, "it was no dream indeed, my darling."

"Then," Hyacinth went on, a little wondering at his words, "the legend flashed back on my mind; it must be the Lady Loring, acting out her crime. I did not move; I lay still and watched her. I tried to think it might be a trick, but who in this house would play such a trick? The way the figure moved made me think of a tiger creeping on its prey. I thought—with a strange kind of calmness—what it was it meant to do; and I wondered if when it reached the inner room, if it did so without seeing me, whether I should be able to get to the door before it had discovered that the inner room was empty; and I wondered if it should see me whether it would have power to kill me; but I never removed my eyes from the figure. It passed on in the same manner, making no sound, and vanished into the bedroom. Then I was on my feet, and made for the door, and just as I reached it, I looked back; and oh! Errol, the figure was behind me, just on the threshold of the inner door—and it sprang forwards—"

She hid her face with a quick sob, shivering from head to foot, and while Lochisla comforted her, his heart was full of stern passion, and he swore by all holy things that, at whatever cost, never should Hyacinth incur again the possibility of this night's peril and fear.

"Were you coming to me from the beginning, heart's dearest?" he whispered.

"Yes, Errol. I never thought of anyone else but you. I knew you were here. I seemed to fly along the corridor, and the figure followed, with its arm uplifted; it never got close—and when I reached the foot of the stairs at the end, I looked back again, and did not see it—it had vanished." She paused, gazing at him earnestly, and added, "It could not have been a human being, Errol—tell me what you think."

"My child, I scarce know what to think. You know I do not doubt that the dead can sometimes revisit the earth. Yet it might be that some servant in the household, taking advantage of the legend, came to your room for robbery."

"But the jewels are in my dressing-room. And then, a thief would not have pursued me; she would have secured the jewels when I left the room."

"True. Still this must be inquired into."

He paused for a moment, and she, exhausted rather than weary, leaned her head against him again, thinking that, deeply moved as he was, he showed little surprise, while his questions seemed to point to suspicion of some living agent.

"Hyacinth," he said, presently, "you can treat your maid?"

"Julie? Oh! Errol, yes. She is as faithful as gold; she might have robbed me a hundred times. Besides, I have had proofs of her goodness."

"That is well. Now, my darling, will you let me leave you for three minutes?—it shall be no longer, Hyacinth," as involuntarily she clung closer to him. The girl drew back at once, lifting her head quickly.

"Forgive me; I am weak and fearful."

"Hyacinth, you are strong and brave; a weaker woman would have fainted at my feet. Only a few minutes, sweetheart." He kissed her tenderly, released her, and rising, quitted the room.

In less than the three minutes Hyacinth heard a quick light step again, and he re-entered the library, locking the door as before. She sprang to meet him.

"Dear one," he said, putting his arm about her, "were you afraid to be alone? No wonder, after what you have passed through."

"Where did you go, Errol?"

"To see if there was anyone lurking about. You see, my Hyacinth, this creature, whether

living woman or spirit, pursued you with a malignant purpose; and so I cannot yield up all idea of mortal agency until I have satisfied myself that no tangible being is responsible for what has happened. Sweetheart, though a Highlander, I am tried soldier too, and twice your age, and so more sceptical."

"But, Errol, you will not say anything to Lady Loring?"

"I must think what is best to do, Hyacinth. Leave it to me, and, meanwhile, say nothing to anyone. If I find it needful to speak of it I shall, of course, only tell part of the truth; that you saw a figure in your room, which presently disappeared, and that next day you told me of it. Now, my child, tell me, if you know, who sleeps in the same corridor in which your rooms are situated?"

"Gwendolen and Julie, and, quite at the other end, nearest the east wing, Clarice Loring."

"No one else, you are certain?"

"Quite certain. There are only two other suites of rooms, and they are empty, and one small room opposite mine, where Julie sleeps."

A sudden light, like a flash, sprang into Lochisla's eyes, but Hyacinth did not see it; she was not looking at him. The girl added, with a slight shudder,—

"I shall have Julie to sleep in my room henceforth. I should never sleep at all if I were alone."

"Best so. And, Hyacinth, will you do this, lock your door every night?"

"Errol! You cannot really think—"

"I know not what to think, my heart; but you will do what I ask?"

"Yes, Errol."

"Fear for you makes me a tyrant, Hyacinth," he said, half wistfully.

The girl raised her eyes with a quick look of pain.

"I had no thought to oppose your wish; you know it," she said.

"Verily, yes, sweet one; so meek to me, so self-reliant, when alone," he said, caressing the soft curls.

"Not self-reliant to-night, Errol. Oh! I need not go back yet—not yet."

"Nay, darling; stay with me till daylight—it is not far off—and then thou wilt not fear."

He led her to the couch again, and as he drew her to his side, he bade her try to sleep, but she shook her head, though she closed her eyes and sat quite silent, resting against him, while he, silent too, thought out his course of action for the immediate future.

And the dawn came creeping up—the blessed morning light—and Hyacinth lifted her blue eyes to the sky, and watched the creeping brightness for some moments, then raised herself.

"Errol, I will go back now."

"I will go with you, sweetheart, to the entrance of the corridor," said Lochisla, as they rose.

He folded her to him and kissed her brow and lips, then led her from the room, and noiselessly they traversed the long passage and the wide stairs. At the entrance to the corridor he left her with only a parting hand-clasp, and whispered "adieu." But he watched her till she vanished into her apartment, and even then he paused, listening for some minutes; but all was as silent as the grave, and, turning away, he sought his own apartments, which were at some little distance from this spot.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHY DID HE QUESTION HER?

BREAKFAST at Bramblemore was on the table from eight to ten, and the early party always included Lord Lochisla, Hyacinth, Gwendolen, Lady Loring, and the Duke of Merivale; not that the latter loved early rising, but he would have arisen at sunrise if thereby he could have enjoyed a longer period of Hyacinth's society. This morning the party was not augmented, for though the three expected guests had arrived the day before none of them had put in an appearance.

Hyacinth was the first in the room after Lochisla, and as he came forward to greet her he looked keenly and anxiously into her face.

"I think I am myself again," she said, smiling, "or quite enough so to wear all outward seeming to any one but you."

"Yes, you will do, sweetheart." He dropped her hand as steps were heard without, and Lady Loring and the Duke of Merivale entered together.

"Gwendolen is late this morning," remarked the hostess, when they were all seated. "Had she a bad night, do you know, Hyacinth?"

"I have not seen her, Lady Loring. I suppose she was tired."

Just then the letters were brought in, and included one for Hyacinth from Louis. A shade fell on her brow as she read. He wrote from Stanhope Lea; the journey, short though it was, had tired him. Nevertheless, he wrote cheerfully, though he admitted that he was lying down.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Lochisla, who sat next her, in a low voice.

"I don't know, Count Errol—not good news. I think Louis is not as well as he makes out," and she gave Louis's letter into his hand.

It flashed through the Earl's mind how little Louis Stanhope would like to think that his letter to Stanhope was being read by Errol Cameron, of all men.

"I agree with you," he said, returning the letter. "Is he alone at the Lea?"

"Only Aunt Philippa is with him; but if he gets much worse, I must go back."

But the Earl did not answer this, and Hyacinth saw that he did not endorse it. She was puzzled. Errol could never wish her to leave Louis if he were really ill or dying.

At nine o'clock Gwendolen entered the room. Lochisla at the moment was standing near one of the windows talking to Lady Loring, and he turned and glanced at the fair face on which the light poured full and clear.

Only a glance, but that brief scrutiny almost satisfied him—almost, not quite.

Hyacinth was nearest to Gwendolen, and Gwendolen kissed her affectionately; then Lady Loring came forward and "hoped she had had a good night's rest, for she was usually one of the early birds."

"Yes, I slept well, thanks, when I did sleep," Miss Stanhope answered, smiling; "but I had a wakeful fit, and that made me sleep late."

Lochisla heard the answer, and as Gwendolen gave him her hand, he said, courteously,—

"You look languid now, Miss Stanhope, perhaps the morning's ride yesterday tired you?"

"Oh, no—not at all; I think I must look more languid than I feel."

Another quick, keen look from those penetrating dark eyes, which Gwendolen, whose own eyes were not looking straight at the Earl, did not see; and he bowed and turned again to his hostess.

The party was very much scattered that morning, for it turned out showery, so that nothing in the shape of an outdoor expedition was possible.

Lochisla rode out at ten o'clock, and was absent the best part of the morning—no wonder when he went more than eight miles to send a telegram. Why did he not send it from Bramblemore? But Errol Cameron knew best; he knew that in country places the secrets of the telegraph-office are not always kept.

Hyacinth was in the billiard-room with the men and the Loring ladies; and Beryl Marchmont practised new songs in the music-room; but Gwendolen shunned society, and withdrawing to the terrace, to a portion where an awning erected against the sun served also for protection against the intermittent showers, tested herself with some fancy work and a

book; but the work progressed little and the book remained open at one place.

She was sitting in the same spot still, gazing out at the trees before her, while that terrible passion of jealousy brooded like a dull fire in her heart, when, about half-past twelve, she heard the sound of hoof strokes, and, looking up quickly, saw the very man who, with Hyacinth, shared her thoughts, riding up the drive. He saw her, too, in the same moment, and bowed low, lifting his hat. Would he come and speak to her, Gwendolen asked herself, or go on into the house?

All doubts were shortly set at rest, for Lord Lochisla, throwing Kaiser's rein to Maslen, who came up opportunely, perhaps having seen his chief and foster brother, ascended the terrace steps and turned towards Gwendolen's retreat.

"I marvel," he said, not seeming to notice that her cheek flushed and her eyes sank as he approached, "to find you alone, Miss Stanhope; but I am glad of the opportunity, for I wished—if you will pardon me for so doing—to ask you a question."

Gwendolen bowed her head, and pointed to the vacant place beside her. He sat down, and turning towards her, said—

"Miss Stanhope, you spoke of having been wakeful last night. I hope it was not that your rest was disturbed?"

This was a strange beginning, and Gwendolen looked at the speaker wonderingly. Clearly something underlay the words.

"No," she said, after a pause, "I was not disturbed. What makes you suggest the idea?"

"Pardon!" While his dark eyes hardly seemed to glance at her, not an expression of the fair countenance escaped him; he was watching her intently. "Miss Stanhope, may I ask you not to mention to anyone that which I am going to speak about?"

"Certainly," said Gwendolen, almost holding her breath. "I will not speak a word."

"Thank you. I asked the first question for this reason. Hyacinth was disturbed in a very strange manner last night." He paused here, but Gwendolen's face showed only startled and intense interest—not a shadow of fear or consciousness. The Earl went on, "She is, remember, though imaginative—many might call superstitious—not at all given to fancies, and physically remarkably fearless. She told me this morning that while lying on a couch in her dressing-room, broad awake, she saw a white figure in the room, which crept, with a crouching gait, towards her bedroom. She could not see the face of the figure, but her thoughts naturally flew to the legend of that Lady Loring who, it is said, murdered some guest of whom she was jealous. Miss Stanhope, forgive me, I should not have told you."

For Gwendolen had drawn a quick, gasping breath, but still no sign of consciousness. He had touched a memory, the memory, perchance, of a terrible thought.

"No, no," she said, eagerly, "go on, I entreat you."

"Hyacinth then watched this figure until it vanished into her apartment. Then she rose to quit the room, when the figure, turning back, seemed to perceive her, and pursued her."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Hyacinth fled," continued the Earl, after another pause, "and, gaining on her pursuer, reached the foot of the stairs, when, looking back, she saw that the form had vanished, nor did she again see it."

Gwendolen's eyes were dilated with horror. "What did Hyacinth do?" she said, at length, "did she faint?"

"No; she summoned courage, after a while, to return to her room, and saw nothing more of her visitor. But, Miss Stanhope, I am unwilling to accept the idea of a supernatural appearance. Such things have been done for robbery."

"Yes; but has Hyacinth been robbed?"

"No; still the thief might have been startled and given up the intention, for, that night, at least. Then, again, there is another tangible solution to the mystery."

"What is that, Lord Lochisla?"

"Sleep-walking."

Gwendolen started and shuddered; the idea of somnambulism is always "eerie" and unpleasant.

"Do you suspect anyone?" she asked, directly.

"No; I merely conjectured."

"Only three people beside Hyacinth sleep in the gallery. Hyacinth, her maid, Clarice Loring, and myself. Julie does not walk in her sleep, neither does Clarice, nor do I. I never did such a thing in my life. The servants sleep a long way off, and what should make one of them traverse all that distance, and seek out Hyacinth especially?"

"True," said the Earl, thoughtfully, "I confess that things seem to favour Hyacinth's idea of a supernatural agent, and I, of course, have no doubt of the abstract possibility of such visitations; but I think one should not accept the supernatural until all natural solutions have failed."

"Aye," said Gwendolen. "I, you know, do not profess to have any faith in ghosts; but we are often less courageous than our opinions, and what you have told me makes me realise that fact."

"Forgive me—" began the Earl, but Gwendolen interrupted him.

"No; I am glad I have heard of the matter; and be sure, if I hear or see anything that may help to elucidate it, I will tell you. Poor Hyacinth! She must have been brave indeed to go back to her room again. Why did she not come to me, or go to Julie?"

"Perhaps at first her only definite instinct was flight. Then when she was able to think she would not like to disturb anyone, with, too, such a tale of horror."

"She has extraordinary self-control. I should never have guessed by her face to-day that she had passed through so much. She ought not to sleep alone any longer."

"No," said Lord Lochisla; "she told me her maid should share her room with her. Such shocks are dangerous things, even to strong men, and Hyacinth is but a fragile girl."

The ringing of the luncheon-bell at this moment put an end to a conversation which Gwendolen would fain have prolonged; Lord Lochisla rose and, with a few courteous words, withdrew. He had discovered all that he had sought to know; but Gwendolen, ignorant of the motive which had led him to her side, nursed a wild hope that perchance he was beginning to unbend a little.

True, his manner was unchanged—courtly, gentle, but indifferent still; and he might have originally spoken to her only to see if she could throw any light on the mystery of last night, but he had gone beyond that necessity. Why, too, had he come to her instead of to Clarice Loring? So may "trifles light as air" bear a grave import when the wish fathers the thought.

It was not till just before dinner that Hyacinth found an opportunity to say a few words privately to Lochisla. She met him in one of the corridors as she was descending to the drawing-room.

"Well met," she said, half smiling, and glancing round her with the instinct of caution, though she knew that no one in the house besides herself and the Earl spoke or understood German. "I wanted to say something to you, Count Errol, and fortune has at last favoured me."

"Say on, my child."

"I think I will not write to Aunt Philippa yet, Errol; not till I see how Louis is. You see I am not actually committed to a decision. What I said was spoken in anger, and Aunt Philippa might suppose I did not fully mean it. She would say nothing to Louis, for he would be so angry with her; and if I write, Louis must know why I leave, and it will make him worse. Besides—" her voice faltered a little as she saw that Lochisla's face gave little encouragement to her idea—"besides, if he should want me to be with him he would not

ask me, perhaps, and it would make it more painful for both of us."

"You want to leave yourself free to return to Stanhope Lea—to live there again?"

"That would only be right, Errol," said the girl, gazing at him in wonderment, for his tone and manner were almost stern.

"Right—maybe," he answered, not meeting her eyes. "But, well—well, my child," he laid his hand on hers—"do not write yet; but promise me that you will do nothing without first speaking to me."

"Of course I should tell you, Errol."

Her lips quivered. It was so perplexing, so passing strange that Errol Cameron should oppose a step which duty and affection alike commanded. He surely could not in any way distrust Louis Stanhope—most loyal, gentlest of men.

"I know that, heart's dearest," said the Earl; "but I wanted something more than to be told you were going to do something to which you are already pledged."

"I have promised even that, Errol. But surely there could be no alternative?"

"Heaven only knows!" said Lochisla, in a low voice. "You look startled"—he stopped, and added, bending down to her—"trust me still, Hyacinth, my child—love; trust me a little longer—only a little longer."

Before the girl could answer those singular words, a distant door opened, and at once the Earl's manner changed. He was lover no more, but soldierly courtier again, and, smiling, placed Hyacinth's hand on his arm and turned towards the staircase, and when Helen Sandon approached, she only saw that Lord Lochisla was leading Hyacinth to the drawing-room.

But those last words filled the girl's heart. They seemed to have only one meaning—separation. She had given him her trust for ever, not for a time only, and he seemed to say, "Trust me till we part; then your faith will be no more tried; then if doubts of the past arise it will be better; so will grief be softened, for love must suffer where doubt enters in." Could he mean that? Let be; she would be silent till the time came, the supreme moment in which the decision must be made—the decision to which she must bow—or which her love, her prayers, must have power to change.

CHAPTER XXX.

MADON ADAMS COMES TO BEAMBLEBERRY.

HYACINTH VERNON was not disturbed that night by the mysterious lady of Loring, nor the night after; and, in addition to locking the door, the further precaution of searching every nook and corner was taken by Julie, who, though Hyacinth gave her no information, readily came to the conclusion that mademoiselle had "seen something." Else why have her—Julie—to sleep in the same room? and why keep a candle burning all night?

Hyacinth herself, when questioned by Clarice Loring and others, would only admit that she felt "nervous." She was superstitious, and could not help putting some faith in the story of the Loring banshee. Gwendolen, too, kept her own counsel well, and so the truth was not suspected—the truth, that is, so far as Hyacinth knew it.

She was thinking of it now; she could not shake herself free of that dreadful night; while she sat on the lawn under the lime-tree, and scarcely heard the Duke of Merivale's pretty speeches, wishing him a thousand miles away, and answering him, when he did speak, so abruptly, that at length he was piqued, and said, reproachfully,—

"Miss Vernon, I am afraid my poor efforts are in vain; I only succeed in boring you."

"Pardon," said she, rousing herself, "but you know it is not my fault. I own I was thinking of some rather painful things; yet, if you would talk to me as if I were a sensible being you might disperse the cloud. If you are too lazy to talk rationally you must not blame me if I am inattentive."



[A HAVEN OF REST.]

The Duke bit his lip and coloured high.

"Miss Vernon, I am reproved. Shall I be silent?"

"If you like to be; but talk common sense, and I will listen."

"Would you listen if I talked the common sense that I should most wish you to hear?"

"That might not be common sense at all," returned Hyacinth, carelessly. "You and I would very likely regard the matter from opposite points of view."

"You ask me to be serious, and when I try to be, you jest."

"For your sake, not mine," said Hyacinth, very gravely; and at that moment she heard Clarice calling her name.

"Here I am," she said, rising quickly, and advancing to meet her friend half way, leaving the Duke to reflect at leisure on her last words.

"Hyacinth," said Clarice, "there is someone here who would like to see you. She is with Gwendolen now—an old woman named Adams."

"Madge Adams!" exclaimed Hyacinth, "how did she come here?"

"I don't know; but she seems to know Lord Lochisla quite well."

"Oh! yes; she comes from Thorndean, you know. I will go and see her. How kind of you to call me. Where is she?"

"In the breakfast-room," returned Clarice.

And a minute later Hyacinth was in the presence of Madge Adams, who embraced and kissed her with tears of pleasure; and then the girl asked wonderingly how Madge came there.

"Easily answered, Miss Vernon," said the old woman. "At the village yonder, beyond Bramblemere, I have a very dear old friend living, and she is very ill, so they sent for me to come and see her, and I went, and found her ill, indeed! but not so bad as I expected. So I thought I would come and see Miss Gwennie and you."

"And Hyacinth," added Gwendolen, "Madge

is going to stay here while her friend needs her, for it seems they can't put her up, and she is going to have the room in which Julie used to sleep."

"Ah! that is nice!" exclaimed Hyacinth, clasping her hands. "But how is it?"

"Why, missy," said Madge, "I was talking to the Earl when Lady Loring came in, and he spoke of me to her, and was so good as to ask her if I could stay here for a little, and she consented—quite pleased to do anything he wished, I thought; and then he mentioned that your maid, missy, slept with you, and there was a vacant room in the corridor, and my lady said she would be only too happy that I should be near Miss Gwennie and you."

"It will be nice," said Hyacinth, caressing Madge's hand. "And Madge, have you seen Louis lately? How is he?"

Madge shook her head, and looked very grave.

"I have been telling Miss Gwennie, missy, he is not at all what I should like to see him. No, I don't mean to say there is any danger, but he is far from being well. I saw him just before I left, and he said he was going to write to you and Miss Gwennie again—in a day or two."

Hyacinth sighed, and turned away with a heavy cloud on her brow; and after some more conversation Madge was allowed to depart under the care of Ian MacIan.

When Hyacinth and Gwendolen retired that night Madge Adams was not yet in her room; the door stood open and all was dark within.

"Gossiping with the servants, no doubt," said Gwendolen; and she entered her own room.

But the servants had already retired, and it was not in the servants' region that Madge was sitting now, but in the library; and opposite to her, speaking to her while she listened with a face grave and perturbed, sat the Earl of Lochisla.

They were not long together; Madge rose up presently, bade the Earl good-night with a

long close clasp of the hand, and taking her chamber candle departed to her room.

But not to rest. The candle was put out, but all night the door was a little open, and close by it, in an armchair, Madge Adams sat, like one who watched by a sick person, with bright, clear eyes wide open that never once blinked or seemed to grow weary. For what did she thus keep watch and ward? Through the long hours not a sound broke the stillness—nothing occurred to afford a reason for that unrelaxing vigil. Yet not till past sunrise did Madge rise from her chair and close her chamber door.

Surely it was not for the perturbed spirit of the jealous lady of Loring that she watched. What power could mortal hand have over the supernatural? And could Madge have sat calm and unmoved if she had expected to see an unearthly visitant?

Besides, it could have been of no spectre that she spoke when before breakfast she met Lord Lochisla—by chance as it seemed—and answered a quick questioning look from him with the low-spoken words,—

"Not a sound nor a sign—all as still as the grave!"

And he answered, "Heaven grant it always so; but we dare not relax the vigil."

Then he passed on, and Madge Adams said within herself, "A spark may light the fire, and then—then—" She shuddered and clasped her hands over her eyes for a moment, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, less actual than of memory. What memory was it that rose up before her with the awful possibility of a repeated reality?

(To be continued.)

EVERY real and searching effort at self-improvement is of itself a lesson of profound humility. For we cannot move a step without learning and feeling the waywardness, the weakness, the vacillation of our movements.



[TERESA FELT THE CLOSE CLASP OF HIS HAND, AND HEARD THE PASSIONATELY SPOKEN "MY OWN DARLING."]

NOVELETTE.]

"AN ILL-ASSORTED UNION."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE SHRUBBERY—MIDNIGHT.

THE moonlight poured in a silver flood over the wide hilly landscape and silvered the trees, whose branches stirred softly now and then as a light breeze swept whispering among them and died away in the leafy depths.

It was near midnight, and all the world was asleep; not a light shone in any one of the numerous windows of yonder rambling old house, half bowered in trees. Yet there was one wakeful spirit—not in the house, but a quarter of a mile away from it—standing alone in the deep gloom of the shrubbery, close to the paling that separated the grounds of the house from a bye-lane turning off the high road. It was a late hour for a woman to be abroad on any errand; and the probability that this young woman had not come forth for a solitary communing with nature, or indeed for the sake of nature at all, would hardly tend to mend matters in the estimation of any well-regulated mind. The woman was young—indeed not more than seventeen—tall, slim, and very handsome. She wore a dark gown and a cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her clustering brown curls, and her large bright eyes were bent eagerly in the direction of the afore-mentioned lane, from whence, evidently, the person for whom she was waiting would come.

In a few minutes the girl's straining ear caught a sound that made her involuntarily clasp her hands together—a sharp quick creak, as would be caused by a momentary weight resting on the frail palings—another second, and a tall man's figure flashed through the moonlight into the shadows; another, and the girl's slender form was in his arms, and his moustached lips were pressing hers with passionate kisses.

"My darling! my own Teresa!" he whispered at length, putting back the hood from her head and gazing down into her beautiful face with a world of love in his own, "it seems so long since we last met. Have you waited long for me to-night?"

"No, not long—not ten minutes, indeed," she answered; "and it would not matter if I had. I am quite safe here, you know."

"I don't feel that you are, sweetheart, unless I am with you; besides it goes against me to keep you waiting, and then—"

"Then what?" said Teresa, nestling to the man's heart like a happy bird.

"Why," he smiled, and folded her still closer to him, "there are so many minutes more of Paradise that I might have had, and missed."

Teresa laughed softly. "That would tell both ways," she said, with a naïveté that forbade any suspicion of coquetry.

"Would it?" The young man bent his handsome face till his lips touched her brow again, lingering there caressingly. "You really mean that, darling?"

Teresa lifted her pained wondering eyes to her lover's.

"Do you doubt me, Grahame?" she said. "Do you think I am too young to be steadfast?"

"No, no. Heaven forbid! It is my own conscience that pricks me sometimes, Teresa—pricks me with the question whether I am acting honourably by you—such a mere girl as you are—and at such times I feel a passing fear lest that thought may occur to you."

"Never!" said she, in a low passionate voice, "never! I cannot make you believe me. I can only tell you the truth. It would be treason in me to think there was one speck on your honour; and if I did think so I could not love you as I do."

"My loyal love! forgive me that I pained you, though you almost tempt me to repeat the offence that I may hear you say again you love me. What makes you trust me so per-

fectly, Teresa? You know nothing of me but what my own lips have told you; you are too young for the worldly knowledge that would be a protection against deception."

"Don't you want me to trust you?" said Teresa, with a wicked little smile quivering on her curved lips.

"Ah! you catch me in my own trap. It would break my heart if you did not trust me, darling; but I want to know why."

"Well, why did you love me? I was not the only girl in the world."

"But the most bewitching—the most irresistible," said Grahame Vivian. "Your Irish blue eyes took my heart captive with the first look they gave me."

"But that is no reason for loving me," persisted Teresa. "You love me because you do, and I trust you because I love you."

Which logic was certainly as good as his own, and about all that love can bring forth; for he or she who can catalogue a list of reasons why this man or this woman became "a part of sight" is not very deeply wounded by Cupid's arrows.

So after a little more lover's nonsense Grahame Vivian turned for a few moments to matters more sublunary.

"Was all safe to-night?" he asked. "Are you sure no one suspected?"

"Quite sure. Minerva sleeps a long way off from my room, you know, and I stole out the way I came before." From which reply it was evident that Miss Teresa had met her lover before in this highly reprehensible manner. He laughed.

"Poor Minerva!" said he; "imagine her horror and consternation if she should discover that one of her young ladies was *non est*."

"She would have an epileptic fit!" returned the wicked Irish girl, her blue eyes dancing with fun; "and when she recovered I should be expelled, and Aunt Mildred would put me into a convent, if she could."

"A needful qualification. I don't think that even if there were no such individual

at a passion were rarely seen. She reproached Athole roundly, while her heart relented at sight of his evident sorrow and serious intention to help. Di and Ruth sat huddled together one end of the couch, silent and sad, borne down by a sense of disgrace and dread. Di was the first to find voice, and said, despairingly,—

"Oh! I dare not face father without his dearest child; she was the very pulse of his heart. And oh! it will kill mother, they have too much to bear at home already."

"Perhaps it may not be so bad as we fear," said Ruth, the consoler. "Cecil is a gentleman, and must love our poor girl; surely he will act fairly by her; if he does not may God so deal with him."

"Amen," said Rodney, solemnly.

Athole drew Mrs. David aside and persuaded her to leave the matter in his hands; he would go at once to town, he said, and trace them if they were in the big city.

"Go, do not lose a moment," said Auntie; "we will follow at once. Here's my card, come to that address to-night and tell me what you have done."

Athole shook hands in silence, and went out from among the weeping women followed by his friends.

"This is a black business, Athole, and strikes at us both. I could not have imagined Cecil so lost to common manliness. We must take up this matter with all our hearts and make him do the girl justice. She's a mere child whose trust in him should have shielded her as with an angel's wing. Hasten to town, enlist the best talent to trace them, and I will follow on with the women, they are not fit to travel alone. I will see to your traps, but lose no time—a train starts in a quarter of an hour."

Athole wrung his friend's hand in silence, and hastened on with a look in his eyes that Rodney felt Cecil would fear to meet.

Months passed and no clue could be found to the fugitives. The tidings had been tenderly broken to the stern old farmer, who, after one bitter outburst, forbade her name to be mentioned again.

Mr. Grace had never forgiven his sister-in-law or Ruth; he said he would not look upon the face of his daughter who had failed to guard her sister. Neither would he sanction her engagement with the false fine gentleman who had called her sister's betrayer friend.

Only Diann—sad-eyed, mournful Diann—was left to be a dear daughter to their desolate old age. Letters from her patient, steadfast lover consoled her a little, and made her look beyond the dreary present to that possible future that might be so happy.

Mr. Grace broke up entirely, neglected their fast failing fortunes, and seemed indifferent to the poverty that threatened their house.

"We have borne dishonour," he said, sternly; "after that, ruin will be but a little burden to our shadowed lives. Let the home go, what worth were it without happiness?"

He would not allow them to appeal to Mrs. David for help; he was unreasonably bitter against the good old woman who was fast sinking with confirmed ill-health through worry. Ruth was with her, tending her with the loving devotion of a daughter.

Athole had never ceased to search for his false friend; he was very loyal and staunch to his love for Ruth. Sometimes she felt if it was not so she should sink beneath the burden of undeserved reproach that was laid upon her.

Winter set in, cold and dull, and Auntie became a complete invalid; her greatest anxiety now seemed for Ruth's future. She knew her brother-in-law's stern, unyielding temper, and knew that he would never forgive Ruth's innocent part in that fatal pleasure trip. So one day Mrs. David sent for Athole, saw him alone, and told him all her fears for her niece's future.

"I could rest content, lad, if she were your wife."

"Then if entreaty can move her she shall be my wife in a week."

Bravely spoken, lad; you shall never regret humouring an old woman's whims. As to her father, he's a mad-man; I've no patience with him. True, his injury is deep and dire, but why punish the innocent? It is fast breaking Ruth's heart. If it were not for love for you and compassion for me she would never hold out against his anger. Why, even in her sleep she weeps and prays for his forgiveness, and calls upon her mother in a way that would move a heart of stone. She wants rousing; never mind her saying she won't marry you because of the disgrace; get the license, appoint the day, and leave the rest to me. I know how to manage her, bless her good stubborn honest heart."

So a few weeks later Athole took Ruth out for a morning stroll, met their friend Rodney, dived into a quiet city church with a maiden and came out with a wife; a woman white, wan, and sad-eyed, but still a wife, and he was absurdly happy to know that henceforth no one could put apart those whom God had joined together.

The marriage was a great relief to Mrs. David too; she only wished she could see Diann safe too, but that was out of the question just now, for though Rodney had been ordained he was without the means of keeping a wife.

To his bitter disappointment the rich living in his miserly uncle's gift, which had been promised him, had been sold over his head and left him in a hopeless state of poverty. Nothing was left him but a poor curacy at the East-end, where, work as hard as he would in God's service, he could hardly earn enough to keep body and soul together.

Reserved and proud he kept his troubles in his own heart, and set to work with a will upon a book which he hoped might win him fame and fortune.

By Mrs. David's desire Athole and Ruth set up housekeeping under her roof; she had no use for more than one room, she said, and though she had a good nurse she could not get on at all without her niece, upon whom she relied by deed of gift the handsome house and all it contained.

To Vivian Damian's intense chagrin the marriage bade fair to be a happy one.

The bride and bridegroom started to spend a week at Brighton. The queen of watering places was at its best and brightest; it was the first week in the new year.

There had been a slight fall of snow that whitened the tops of the houses and made the Pavilion sparkle like a fairy palace.

The hear-frost hung on the trees like diamond sprays, and the hard road rang beneath one's feet like a sounding-board; and such a glorious sea, the white horses pranced high, flinging their foamy manes over the cliff.

Thanks to Mrs. David, Ruth had a splendid outfit, so that she made no mean figure among the fashionable throng that promenade the King's-road, the West Pier, or the Aquarium.

Athole was proud of the notice she provoked by her fresh bright beauty and happy looks. Joy seemed to have transfigured her into a perfect beauty.

Long after, when they were parted by a cruel mistrust, Athole remembered that week of complete and entire happiness. They had taken a suite of rooms in one of the mansions facing the sea on the West Cliff, and were content to be quite alone together.

Oh! the foolish happy time when the charm of married life was new to them.

How good it was to see the young wife with shy sweet grace trying to become all at once a dignified matron; the pains she took to make people believe they were quite old married folks, and how indignant she was when Athole hid his face behind his paper and roared at her attempts to be dignified; how afraid she was of the starchy landlady, and how glad when Athole took it into his head to order dinner.

They had been there three days, when one evening they walked arm-in-arm into the large

hall of the Aquarium; a concert was going on, and the place was crowded.

Athole smelt the scent of a subtle sweet perfume that somehow reminded him of Vivian; it was an uncommon scent that she always used and a favourite one with him.

A tiny gloved hand was laid upon his arm and he looked up quickly to see Vivian more beautiful than ever, smiling at him beneath a huge plumed hat of silvery grey; a grey velvet robe trimmed with chinchilla and finished with oxidized silver, made a costume that was the envy of all the lovely ladies present.

"My dear Athole, what an unexpected pleasure. Mamma and I are staying at the Bedford. Pray introduce me to your wife."

Athole looked vexed, but complied. Ruth felt her face flush hotly beneath the bold stare of Vivian's sleepy dark eyes. Then an old lady, very dignified and distinguished looking, took her hand kindly and spoke in a pleasant proud way to her that she could not resent because it was so evidently her natural manner.

Vivian at once claimed Athole's attention by chatting in her bright restless manner about mutual friends who were quite unknown to Ruth.

"Ladies can be intensely ill-bred," thought Ruth, resentfully, when she saw how Vivian managed to interest her husband about all sorts of petty little scandals that, quickly translated as they were by Vivian's wit, still sounded a little coarse to this simple country girl who was "still unspotted from the world."

Her fair face flushed indignantly as she heard her husband's low musical laugh as he told his cousin that she got "quite too utterly naughty for anything."

Feeling out of the cold, but too proud to let him see how his lovely cousin's familiarity vexed her, Ruth sat down beside Mrs. Damian and chatted away so brightly that that lady afterwards declared her "a charming girl, wants chic and that sort of thing, you know; but one can pardon anything for the sake of such a sweet face."

Vivian tried to make friends with her cousin's wife, but a strange instinct of mistrust caused Ruth to shrink from her; a strange repugnance made her manner cold and distant. Vivian bit her lips angrily, and a gentleman passing said to his companion, "My lady Caprice looks vexed; I pity the poor being who has offended."

Athole walked about with his cousin when they left the Aquarium, and Mrs. Damian insisted upon his bringing Ruth in to supper. Ruth held back; but it seemed so evidently her husband's wish to go that she yielded.

Vivian took her up to her own room to remove her walking apparel, lent her some cosy shoes, and gave her a big bunch of hot-house flowers to fix at the neck of her ruby-coloured dress.

The two girls went down together, hand in hand, Vivian arranged this much to Ruth's disgust; she hated gush, and in her simple, sincere fashion was slow to show friendship, but Vivian seemed determined to be friendly whether she would or not.

In a handsome room supper was laid for seven. Ruth's eyes drew her husband to her side.

"I am glad you are wearing that pretty plash trimmed dress," he said, smiling; "it makes you look so pretty and sweet."

Two gentlemen and a lady were the other guests, the latter a quaint bird-like little American woman, with the quick insured manner so common to her nation. Her husband, a heavy-looking man about forty, seemed to live only in the light of his wife's eyes.

Ruth in her own mind set him down as a good-natured simpleton, and was surprised to hear that he had made one of the biggest fortunes on record by a "spec" that had originated in his own huge head.

The other gentleman was of different mould, he had the Greek beauty of a young god, crisp waving auburn hair, severely enough to show the shape of his fine head, blue eyes, clear as

crystal fountain, that looked inquiringly into Ruth's face. He was a well-known composer, a man of whom the world had made an idol.

Supper passed off merrily; it was a jolly informal meal, where everyone ate, drank and said what they pleased, and were very merry.

After supper Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Damian gambled a little, Vivian whispered with her cousin much to Ruth's discomfort, and the saucy little American rallied her about being a bride.

Ruth felt relieved when Barry Lennox proposed some music, and the little lady went to the piano and rattled away at some dashing tuneless thing, which seemed to afford herself great pleasure. Then Barry Lennox played a dreamy harmony, that brought tears into Ruth's eyes, for it seemed to speak of home. After this Athole made his wife sing for them, and at the first sound of her sweet, pure voice, they all gathered round the piano entranced.

"I tell my little woman her soul is made up of music," said Athole, proudly.

When they begged her to sing again, she accompanied herself, and sang the quaint old ballad she had set to music in the happy innocent time, when the sisters were the life and light of the old farm-house.

"Oh! the broom, the bonny broom,
The broom that makes full cheer;
A woman's merriness is very little,
But a man's merriness is more."

"I should like to shake hands with the man who set that to music," said Barry Lennox. "Every note is so true and marks so surely the meaning of the words."

Athole smiled and Ruth flushed up, this was praise indeed.

Vivian then sang a song in a clear, high, soaring soprano, and then they fell into a jolly little chat; the American lady fairly frightening Ruth by smoking a cigarette and drinking liqueur.

Very saucy looked the stylish little lady in a low lounge chair, with her pretty rounded arms, on which sparkled diamonds that might have been a duchess's, clasped above her close cropped boyish-looking head. Ruth was shocked to see that she made eyes at Athole, who seemed to like it.

Vivian smiled and whispered, "Don't be jealous, Mrs. Ventry; Ruby always flirts with every man that is new to her. It is only her way; she is a dear little thing and means no harm."

Ruth nodded and smiled brightly; she quickly got up an animated discussion on art and music with that blonde Hercules, Barry Lennox, who admired her immensely.

"That night, just before going to sleep, Ruth nestled into her husband's arms, saying, 'Athole, I don't like your cousin, she somehow reminds me of the Jewess in my song, who murdered the schoolboy at Lincoln.'"

"Ill-natured little goose, go to sleep, and don't try to take prejudices. Vive's a very good sort when you know her, and she admires you awfully."

CHAPTER VIII.

"AT HER MERCY."

AFTER receiving a very favourable account of Mrs. David, Athole decided to prolong their stay at Brighton until his aunt and her party returned to town. They were having a very jolly time of it now, riding, hunting, dancing, as though life were only made for enjoyment.

Sometimes Ruth would sigh and wish Athole and she were all alone together again, and he would take her in his arms and kiss her back to contentment.

Ruth did not grow more fond of Vivian as time went on. She got to like the little American so much that she could almost forgive her fastness and flirtation with Athole; but when she felt Miss Damian's dark serpent eyes trying to read her very soul, a little shudder would pass over her as from a sudden chill, the sort of feeling one expresses by saying "someone is walking over my grave."

Ruth tried to overcome her dislike for Athole's sake, since they were his only relations, and succeeded, at least, in manner.

Ruth's friendship with the young composer grew and strengthened as they knew more of each other, and she was grieved to see that all the love of his noble manhood had gone out to Vivian, who treated him with the cruellest caprice. It seemed to amuse her to make him insanely jealous of Athole, who with thoughtless levity allowed himself to be drawn into all Vivian's wicked little snares.

It never occurred to him that his wife would mistrust his friendship with his charming cousin, and "it looked so absurd for a fellow to be spoony on his own wife in public, though they had been married only a month, and as yet his sweet little wife could not doubt his love."

So thought Athole, and he allowed the tiny speck in the heaven of his domestic peace to spread into a big black cloud.

Poor proud little wife, why did she not tell her husband how wretched his lovely cousin managed to make her.

One morning Vivian put on her dark sealskin coat and bonnet, tied a thick gossamer veil over her face, and slipped out before her mother awoke. By the way she consulted her watch, it was evident she had an appointment.

She called a fly and ordered the man to drive to Charlotte-street, and alighted before a handsome house. Just as her hand was on the knocker, the door was opened by a gentleman, who uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure at sight of her?

He was a rather handsome specimen of the chosen people, dark and decided looking, with a crafty pair of far-seeing eyes and an insidious smile.

"My dear young lady, how glad I am I had not started. I was just off for town. Come in."

He led her into a handsomely fitted private office, placed a chair for her and stood, hat in hand, waiting to hear her pleasure.

"Have you succeeded, Mr. Somers?"

"Beyond my most sanguine hopes. The Grange Farm is yours. I don't mean to say it is worth the price it cost, which was a stiff figure, I fancy."

"No matter, I can afford it. What of Cecil Caitness; have you traced him?"

"Yes, traced him to Salisbury; he has put that pretty girl he ran off with into a cosy little place called 'Sweetbriar Lodge,' on Milford Hill. I have got every scrap of paper that is about him; you have but to put out your hand and crush him, for that old fellow, his uncle, is sick in the south of France, and refuses even to hear from him."

As he spoke of crushing, the lawyer held out his handsome white hand, on which a rare rose diamond glittered, in a stealthy manner infinitely revolting.

Vivian smiled contentedly, but the smile changed to a look of proud reserve when he bent towards her, and said, in a soft smooth voice,

"I wonder why you hate these people so."

"That is a matter that cannot concern you, Mr. Abel Somers. I will wish you good morning."

"Nay, permit me to walk back to your hotel with you."

He had followed her to the door, as he spoke, and she saw something in his black eyes that caused her to check the quick denial that rose to her lips, and allowed him to walk on by her side in silence.

They walked down the Marine Parade together, and just by Brill's ran against Athole, who, with a couple of dogs, was walking swiftly in the opposite direction.

At sight of his cousin and her escort Athole's face flushed darkly; lifting his hat stiffly, he said,

"You are out early, Miss Damian."

Vivian held out her hand nervously, and Abel Somers stood back with an evil smile on his coarse lips.

"I will return with you, Vive; dismiss that

fellow. You must be mad to be seen with him," said Athole, under his breath.

Vivian flashed an angry look at him, but seeing the smouldering fire in his eyes she thought it best to obey, so holding out her hand, with a sweet smile, she said,

"I need not detain you longer, Mr. Somers, I am afraid as it is you will miss your train through me. I breakfast with my cousin, so I will return with him."

Abel Somers smiled darkly, bowed low, and walked swiftly round into East-street. Then Vivian said,

"Mr. Somers does business for me sometimes; I met him just now by accident; but what is there against the man?"

"Everything—he is a cad, a blackdog. Why only yesterday some men in our set refused to play at the same board with him. Drop the man at once; he is not to be trusted in any capacity, though, I confess, he's cute on 'Change.'"

"I am glad you told me," said Vivian; "but as to knowing him in town, of course, that's quite different. Sea-side acquaintances are like travelling friendships, dropped directly one gets home. How is Ruth? Mrs. Johnson and I want her to go with us to Brill's presently; can she swim?"

"No, I wish she could," said Athole, his thoughts reverting to the leaky boat at Yarmouth.

"I should be pleased to teach her," said Vivian; "I think every woman should know how to swim."

They had been walking briskly, and were now past the Pier and near the Bedford.

"Come on with me to breakfast, Vive; don't make yourself a fibber. 'Ru will be pleased to see you; I am afraid she finds breakfast a very prosy affair with me, I must read my paper.'"

Vivian went willingly, for breakfast was a dull meal, and she felt in need of company.

They found Ruth looking fresh and sweet in a dress of warm white serge, relieved by some handsome silver jewellery and a bunch of crimson asters at her neck.

The wintry sun lighted up every graceful curve of her superb form, flashed on the silver buckled shoes, and shone on the burnished waves of her bronze hair.

Vivian, whose rare strange beauty looked best by candle-light, felt herself fade and pale before this girl-woman, who looked like a pure fresh spirit of dawn.

Athole smiled into his wife's reproachful eyes, she never seemed alone with him now, and was vexed to find that the first and, to her, most enjoyable meal of the day was to be shared by the one woman in the world she heartily disliked.

During the meal it was arranged Ruth should accompany Vive and the American belle to Brill's to learn to swim.

"I have a white serge bathing-dress I can lend you, Mrs. Vintry," said Vivian, as she took leave, "so you need not bother about getting one."

About noon they met as appointed at the baths. Vivian, in a jersey suit of pale blue that fitted close to her supple shape, stood in the water trying to tempt Ruth to be courageous.

Miss Damian looked very lovely, her cheeks were ablaze, her eyes sparkled beneath the oilskin jockey-cap covered with washing silk that protected the smooth ropes of high coiled hair.

Ruth with her rounded limbs bare sat nursing one of her rosy-soled feet, and protesting against the plunge Vivian desired her to take.

The little American stood in a poppy-coloured swimming dress, smoking a cigarette, and chaffing as only an American woman can or dare chaff. Her slim little feet were crossed, and as she spoke she put one foot against Ruth's dimpled shoulders, and with the strength of a young athlete, pushed her gently in.

Vivian laughed at the horror of Ruth's looks as she stood in the water breast high. Mrs. Johnson skipped in after them, and began to frisk and frolic like a lively young eel.

By degrees they persuaded Ruth to be brave, and then gave her a few lessons in swimming. Vivian swam like a fish, and managed to make Ruth comprehend all that was required.

La belle Americaine got gossiping with an acquaintance at the shallow end of the bath, and Vivian guided Ruth's first feat of courage.

Vivian had been struck afresh by Ruth's perfect beauty; her blood was on fire with jealousy of her. A fiendish light of wild impulse blazed out of her dusky eyes, a murderous thought flashed through her perverted mind.

What if she had the power to still those rosy lovely limbs for ever; what if she could snatch all that witching womanhood from the embrace of the man she loved; the man who had cast her love back as a thing of so little worth that he had not been aware of its possession?

Would he always be as cold to her, she wondered, if this woman who had won him were lost to him for ever?

Her face grew ghastly grey, her eyes dilated like liquid stars, her breath came in great cruel gasps.

Ruth raised above the water a smooth white hand from which she had removed all her rings but the golden symbol of wifehood. The light seemed to concentrate upon the glittering hand and mock Vivian with its holy meaning.

A sudden rage roused all the demon in Vivian, it was the work of a moment to snatch her hand away and press the lovely struggling body below the water; it was deep just there, and Vivian's feet were pressed upon Ruth's white flesh, and outside in the frosty sunshine the husband who loved her, smoked and strolled by Barry's side, humming little snatches of the waltz the town band was playing.

(To be continued).

WONDERFUL BIRDS.

A GENTLEMAN by the name of Carpenter has told us about a talking robin. This bird was captured while young by a pet dog, and after recovery from his fright was domesticated. He not only imitated the notes of canary birds, but learned to whistle from his mistress. He learned to speak the words "Pretty Bobby," the pet name by which he had long been called.

It having been found that he imitated those words, the formula was changed to "Sweet Bobbie," which he imitated very distinctly; and he learned to utter, though not quite so distinctly, the phrase "Pretty little fellow."

The gentleman vouching for the truth of this statement is a strong advocate of the theory that birds can communicate with each other by language.

Many also believe that birds have a sense of humour. We can show that at least one bird enjoyed a practical joke.

When the *Challenger* stopped at the port of Bahia, Brazil, according to Sir C. W. Thomson's statement in his book on the voyage, some of the passengers went to Santo Amaro, a town about twenty miles distant. There a new line of tramway had recently been built, with a sharp incline to a steamboat wharf. Dr. Thomson's party arrived in season to take the trial trip on the new tramway.

As the truck that carried the party went down the incline, the agonized cries of a child, followed by low moans, were heard apparently from beneath the wheels.

Instantly the brake was applied, and the truck stopped with a sudden jerk. The scientific party jumped out, and looked around and under the truck in vain. A lot of swarthy native children stood near the rails, looking on vaguely and curiously, but not as if anything had happened to any of their number.

When the passengers, mystified, returned to their seats, a parrot, hanging in a cage on the truck, burst into a loud, mocking laugh, and was at once recognized as the performer in the previous screaming and moaning. The observations in Bahian patois, thereupon addressed by the truck-drivers to the parrot, included some very vigorous language.

STRAYED AWAY.

A STORY OF A LOVE.

CHAPTER III.

TEMPTATION.

FAULKLAND took the boat to shore in time to have a leisurely ramble with Fanny before the dinner hour. They lingered by a gate in the old park, under the golden sunshine, and Percy talked to her in a tone of dreamy tenderness, very pleasant to her heart. She had never passed a happier day.

She had been out for the day with Fred Crosby, now and then. On Sunday and Monday, after the workmen's fashion, they had gone per steamboat to Gravesend, and dined on board, or in the dining-room at Rosherville, and they had carried home calico bags of shrimps as mementos of their visit; but Fanny had not enjoyed herself as she did now. Fred was a mechanic, and was proud of being one. He called the waiter "old chap," and interlarded his conversation with such phrases as "now then; look here, you know;" and "that's the style," or, "it's the finest thing out"—all of which, though very harmless, Fanny felt would be unpardonable sins in Mr. Falkland's eyes.

Percy was dignified in the presence of the attendants; they seemed to obey his gestures rather than his words. He said "Thanks," with an air of grace, and delicately led her out of little difficulties by preceding her in the use of rose water, and the proper duties of finger-glasses. They dined in a cosy room overlooking the water, and dessert was served on a table near the window, by Percy's desire. He tempted Fanny with deliciously enticing liqueurs and seductive wines, and rattled on with gay, poetic sentiment till the golden twilight came. Fanny was waited upon like a princess by a smart chambermaid, who confused her by too much assiduity, and when they left, a whole regiment of waiters bowed them out of the hall.

They did not go early. They sat at the open window, and the cool, fresh breeze came in. They were quite alone, and even the sound of passing footsteps fell softly on carpeted passage or stair. Percy ordered tea at dusk, and sighed as he gave the order for the gas to be lighted.

"It is like breaking a spell," he said, "for this is the dreamer's time—the lover's hour. Do you wish for lights, or shall we remain as we are for a little while?"

"As we are. It is very quiet—very pleasant, this."

So it was. The first faint stars were twinkling. There were moonbeams alighting like shafts of silver in the stream; and now and then a boat glided past with no more noise than that made when the water rippled under the measured sweep of the oars. The beauty of the hour and the scene lent a purity to her face that woke the better part of Percy's nature.

"Pleasant," he said, "pleasant as a dream. I wish it were to last for ever. It seems a pity to go back to the dull reality—to separate you and I, and have all the finer fancies awakened now trampled out of us before we meet again."

Miss West said nothing; but his words had their effect. She did not know how to answer him. The fear of being incorrect or commonplace held her silent.

"We live in fetters," he went on. "Our every action and impulse is guided by the code conventional, and we must do nothing that it does not sanction. We are governed by the laws of a society that, after all, is none too good for its own discipline. There is a beaten track to tread, and we must tread it or beware of that terrible creature, Mrs. Grundy."

"Who is she?" Fanny asked, in the innocence of her heart. "I never heard of her before."

Mr. Falkland laughed.

"She is the mysterious leader of the 'they sayers,' Fanny. The lady with the hundred tongues of flame and venom; the puritan and uncharitable misinterpreter of her neighbour's actions. It is she who makes the mischief; wonders, in a whisper, how it is that Miss Brown runs so frequently against Mr. Smith, who is a married man—how is it that Mr. Shopley maintains such an establishment, when she was told that he was on the brink of insolvency. She will find us out by-and-bye; she will question your discretion and speculate as to my intentions—thinking that because we find innocent pleasure in each other's company I must have intentions."

He touched upon a point that had troubled Fanny gravely. What were his intentions? A pleasant harmless flirtation only—or would he, in defiance of Mrs. Grundy and the wide social gulf that divides the rich and poor, ask her to be his wife?

"We live in fetters," he said again. "We are victims of convention. The thing that is and must not be disobeyed. It makes a Draconian law, and measures out our existence; teaches us how we must live, no matter what our inclinations are. It will give you, in time, Fanny, to a respectable young journeyman carpenter, on six-and-thirty shillings a week when in full work, and semi-starvation, when work is not to be had. It will compel me to marry some pretty doll, who can struggle through a French novel, torture a piano, and dress to be looked at—a mere feminine nonentity, whose idea of a home is a house-full of fine furniture, and who would be less my wife than Mrs. Falkland, the mistress of my residence. Such a fate is in store for me, Fanny. I shall be chained to such a woman, and be obliged to seem happy while I dream, perhaps, of this quiet evening—this sweet *little-dittle* by the river with you."

"You could avert such a fate," said Fanny, with a pained feeling at her heart.

"How?"

"A man is independent; a woman is helpless. She exchanges one state of dependence for another—a one state of labour for another. It is very likely that it may be as you say with me. I shall be glad to escape from the workroom by accepting the respectable young carpenter, and as much as he may choose to give me of his six shillings a day."

"Don't talk of it, for goodness' sake; it is sacrilege. I would rather run away with you myself, and risk the chance—almost the certainty, of being cast off by my father."

"He would think himself disgraced by such a thing—would he not?" asked Fanny, with a slight curl of the lip, yet with a cold pain.

"I believe he would give me his malediction in the orthodox style, and he would never repent of it either. He is very conservative. Men who have sprung from the ranks generally are, and he is no exception to the rule. A poor man hates the wealthy till he has acquired wealth; then he detests the poor with all his might, if they are above their bondage. You would never be more to him than the daughter of his foreman. Your intelligence, your beauty would go for nothing while your father wears a white jacket and carries a tool basket at his back."

"You need not remind me of these things," said Fanny, a little coldly; "they are miserable truths that I feel quite keenly enough."

He drew the curtain half across the window, and went to her side. There was passionate, suppressed fervour in his tone as he said,—

"You love me, Fanny, as deeply, as fondly, as I love you, I am sure of it. You will not answer. You will not tell me so, or if you answer, it will be to say that we have seen so little of each other—that this is only the second time we have met."

"You forget, Mr. Falkland," said Fanny, with a touch of irony, though she trembled under his glance, "ours is merely an innocent pleasure in each other's company, and you have no intentions."

"Little, lovely witch, you quote my own words to torment me for my sins. I must have you, if I risk more than ruin."

He had her in his arms before she was aware of his intention, and left a burning kiss on her lips.

The day had not been spent fruitlessly. He had tested her character, sounded the depths, and found her pure-minded and high principled. The faults she had arose from want of training. She went into danger unthinkingly because she did not know where danger existed. Her peril was great with Percy, for she was strongly in love with him; and he, asking himself what he should do, whether the affair should end with this day's meeting—whether there should be no despairing of this fierce, feverish, expectant joy, that was a temptation to him—would he drop the intercourse from the present time—keep out of her way and forget her, as he had forgotten a hundred others?

No. He was seriously in love with her. It was not a good love—passion had quite mastered him, and it urged him on to any sacrifice. He dared not breathe a word except in perfect honour, for fear of losing her at once and for ever, and he could not give her up.

"Is there no way by which we might be happy?" he asked, sitting by her side. "No way by which we might have many such days? You see we must meet secretly, Fanny, for your sake as well as mine. If my father heard we were together, he would dismiss yours at once, and do all in his power to injure him. I am sure—and we should quarrel. I should, perhaps, leave home. I would rather risk it than lose you."

"We had better not meet again, Mr. Falkland; it cannot come to good."

"You had better not say so, unless you want to come to harm. Swiftly as the day has gone, it has been an age of pleasure to me. Hour by hour I have been losing myself more hopelessly. I would not let you know you have acquired all this power, if I were not sure that it gladdened you to know it. Yesterday I planned this holiday for pastime, the mere enjoyment of a pretty girl's company with the zest of novelty added in the way we spend our holiday. To-day I feel as if we have been lovers for years; and, if I were free, I would ask you to be my wife at once."

"And repent it ever afterwards," said Fanny, quietly. She could be calm when she saw him moved. "I have heard of such things before, Mr. Falkland. A rich and educated man with a poor untaught wife. Your friends would sneer at me—you yourself would tire of me."

"A man does not marry for his friends."

"But he must study them. Look at my family connections and yours."

Percy winced. She was trying him hard.

"A man does not marry his wife's family connections, Fanny."

"But he cannot separate her from them for ever."

"He would not wish to, were he kind; but these things find their level. Families are divided in the natural way; the sons marry, and the wives agree pleasantly to detest each other with the bitterest cordiality, and to keep the brothers separate; the daughter's marry, and the husbands disagree. The entrance of a stranger into any family is the entrance of an element of separation and disunion. A man's private circle nearly comprises much of his wife's as his own family. The safest and most pleasant friends are strangers."

"A very selfish idea, Mr. Falkland."

"I don't know. Strangers meet and are drawn together by sympathy. There is no obligation in their liking; they are not expected to be enraptured with each other as persons are between whom there is a tie of blood or marriage. Their friendship lasts the longer for being untrammelled, and, if broken, it is broken with little pain. We, for instance, if married, could live out of town—at a safe distance from our family friends. The length of the

Journey would test their affection, and they would not come often."

"The difference between us is too wide," said Fanny, thoughtfully. She could picture what kind of treatment her working brother would receive from Percy's friends.

"We will think of that afterwards," said Falkland, pressing her hand. "Let us be happy while we may; it is a weakness to leave the golden present, and look for coming shadows."

They went back to town late in the evening. Both were reluctant to leave the cosy apartment by the quiet starlit river. Percy planned other excursions before they parted—afternoon amusements and evening strolls in places where there was no danger of his being recognized. He was more deeply in love than ever; his passion placed him at her mercy.

Fanny grew very tired of her home. The maternal eye was too sharp for her; the domestic arrangements did not leave her sufficient liberty of action. She had to invent pretexts for going out so frequently at unusual times, and her mother began to grow suspicious. Once when Fanny was going out in the afternoon to meet Percy in the old place of rendezvous she ran against Fred Crosby in his working dress.

Poor Fred had been treated coldly of late. She would never go for a walk with him. He was quite amazed in the present instance to see her sweep past him with her eyes fixed in a directly opposite direction. She would have gone on without giving him a chance of speaking, had not the lace trimming of her mantle caught on the point of an umbrella that an eccentric old gentleman, in rusty black, carried under his arm.

A smart young draper, whom a long course of counter training had endowed with a certain sort of grace, was the first to offer assistance, but Fred coolly pushed him aside, and extricated Miss West. She had to thank him, though her cheeks were crimson with annoyance.

"Thank you, Fred," she said, not taking his hand. He had been at work, and it would have soiled her glove. "I am in such haste."

"You generally are when you see me," said Crosby, sadly—"especially lately. If you want to break it off, and have got somebody else, why, say so, and I will bear it; but don't treat me like this for no cause whatever."

"Break what off," she said, almost sternly. "There is nothing to be broken between us, I am sure."

"Then you are a very altered girl; for I know everybody thought it was all right with us, and I know you understood that was what was meant. It isn't right, Fanny. You ought to have behaved better to a fellow."

Fanny went on with a gesture of impatience, and Fred made no attempt to stay her. He was proud in his way; and the handsome young carpenter knew that he was a favourite with the girls of Lambeth. But there was only one Fanny West.

Singularly enough, when he reflected on the time that her coldness began, he remembered the scene in the builder's yard when Fanny first saw Percy. The younger Mr. Falkland associated himself in some way with Fanny's absence from home this morning.

"I wonders where she's going, and who she meets?" Fred thought, with a want of regard for the Lindley Murrayian rules that were prevalent in the district. "I have half a mind to see."

It did not strike him that he was doing anything mean or wrong in following her. Fanny might be going to meet someone from whom she was better away, in which case it was clearly Fred's duty to interfere.

"I don't think much of that Emily White," he meditated; "she's flighty, and I don't like her style. Them two girls goes out together a deal too often lately, and perhaps Miss White isn't too good an adviser."

There was no love lost apparently between Fred and Emily. She called him old sober-sides, and said she would as soon keep com-

pany with an undertaker's mate. Secretly she liked him better than he was ever likely to know.

Emily White had been the innocent scape-goat to a great extent recently. Fanny was out nearly every day at some time or other, and Fred Crosby began to marvel at the pertinacity with which his offers to meet them were rejected.

"Ten to one," he said, as he followed Fanny, "it's some half sort of swell she's met with Emily. If it is, and I see him, he shall have a bit of my mind."

Fred did not see him. There was a hansom cab outside the gallery in Trafalgar-square. It had just driven up, and Crosby saw Percy Falkland spring from it as Fanny approached. He saw them shake hands, enter the vehicle, and they whirled past him as he stood on the kerbstone, motionless with astonishment.

They saw him. Fanny shrank back into the corner, Percy muttered an execration.

"Did he see us, do you think?" asked Falkland.

"I am afraid he did."

"Confound him! But he will not dare say a word for fear of leaving his work. There would be the deuce to pay if he did."

"I do not think he would say anything," said Fanny. "He is a very good-natured young man, and would not injure me."

Things were coming to a crisis now. The elder Falkland had accepted a contract for a great engineering work on the German borders, and Percy was to superintend it. He was a good linguist and a clever engineer, and the work was to commence soon.

He had already hinted at a quiet marriage, to be kept secret from their friends. Fanny was very tired of her humble home, with its humiliating cares and labour. She was negligent too, and Mrs. West scolded her well for it. Fanny's pride suffered severely at her mother's hands. No one sympathised with her in Falkland-row.

"There are plenty of facilities now," said Percy. "Marriage is an easy civil ceremony. I have only to register our names one day, and then appear with you three weeks hence at the office of the registrar. There are no old-fashioned formalities of banns and licences; in fact, Fanny, we are almost married."

Miss West looked at him in wonder.

"See," he said, producing a printed slip, "here is the copy of the registration. I went for it this morning."

To Fanny it was a mystery that such a thing could be. There was a contract of marriage before her eyes; her name coupled with his, and obtained without her knowledge. They were to appear within one-and-twenty days at the office of the registrar.

CHAPTER IV.

GONE.

FRED CROSBY did not mention what he had seen. It was a cruel blow to him; but his chief concern was for Fanny West. He knew young Falkland's character, and looked upon her as lost already.

He did not return to work that day, and was severely talked to by old Bill West in consequence. He did not care—he could not; he was so disappointed, so despairing. For the first time in his life Fred haunted a tavern from mid day till night, picking up any idle associate who was willing to drink with him, and seeking refuge in the worst solace open to him.

Most people have a little world of their own—a small circle round which they revolve with the regularity of the earth's motion. Fred had certain haunts where he was in the habit of meeting certain of his mates—taverns in which friendly clubs and harmonic meetings were held. It is odd and hard that the poor man can neither benefit nor enjoy himself without giving profit to the publican!

Fred being out of temper with Fanny, himself, and the world, stopped away from his

usual haunt and went a little further off. He was seen by a neighbour, who told Mrs. West, and Mrs. West told her husband.

"He has been at the Red Lion all the afternoon, drinking with the men on strike from Batleys."

Next to a charlatan or a free-thinker, old Bill West thought there could be nothing so unconstitutional as a man on strike. Batley paid as well as Falkland, and he had done very well on Falkland's money. There was something to be feared; one of Falkland's best hands away from work all the afternoon, and in company with the discontented from Batleys.

"It's a case, misus," said old Bill, laying down his pipe, "that must be looked into. No good never came from strikes, and no good never will. The poor can't fight the rich. Them as have the money can spend it or not, as they like; them as have to work must get what they can, how they can. Not as I don't see why working men shouldn't co-operate and be their own masters, by making a capital of their own; but till they does, strikes can only end in favour of the masters and the publicans. For why? the men call a meeting—public-house; they engage a committee-room—public-house; they appoint delegates—public-house; the men on strike come for club money—public-house. You never heard of a strike being conducted at a temperance hall, I'll wager."

Old Bill went down to the Red Lion, and found Fred Crosby leaning over the bar in a revolutionary state of mind, with a glass of ale in his hand. He was rather confused when he first saw West, but he soon recovered himself.

"Have some ale with us, Mr. West?"

"I make it a rule to drink at home, Fred, thank you all the same. I came in just to say I want a few words with you."

"He's come to take you home," said one of Batley's delegates, who had been inducing Fred to stir up edition in Falkland's yard. "Go with him, like a good little boy."

"Perhaps if you was a little more at home, and a little less here, your wife and children would look the better for it," said old Bill West. "It's very well for you, with plenty of beer and tobacco, talking about politics and never thinking of the little 'uns at home. I've seen such as you before to-day."

The man was silent. West had hit him home, and the laugh was against him.

"Now, lad, you are coming with me. There's somebody at home I daresay you will be glad to see."

"Not Fanny?" said Fred, expectantly.

"Never mind who. You come and see. What would she say to see you in this state?" Crosby crushed the glass into fragments on the counter.

"Why, she wouldn't care a bit—not she. She may come to worse with my betters. But—"

"Hush, now. The drink's talking, Fred, or you would not say such things. Now, come along."

He partly persuaded and partly pulled the young man out. The cool air sobered Fred, and he put his hand to his brow, as if to collect his thoughts. He had not gone twenty yards with West before he heard a familiar footstep behind him.

It was Fanny going home.

"Mr. West," he said, with a sober earnestness of tone and manner that started the foreman by its suddenness, "just go on in front a bit, and let me follow on with Fanny. I have a word or two to say to her."

West went on; remarking to his daughter that "it was rather late for her to be out." She was pale, and trembled with the fear that Fred had told of her.

He had been drinking, but she did not know it, though she saw a strangeness in him. The quieter phrase of intoxication was unknown to her.

"I suppose," she said, her lip curling, "you have told father everything?"

"Not a word, my girl," he answered, more in sorrow than anger. "I am not one to make mischief. I hope your own sense will keep you

in the right way; for you must know that I can mean you no good."

"I cannot talk with you on this subject," she said, haughtily. She had begun to adopt Percy's style unconsciously. "You have no right to speak to me about it, Mr. Crosby."

"Mr. Crosby," he repeated, bitterly. "It used to be Fred before you got your head turned in the work-room, and went out with those dressed-up images. It's a bad finish to your folly, this going out with your father's master's son. I meant you well, Fanny. I shall not be a journeyman all my life. There's my father's shop, and he'd be glad for me to go now."

Miss West smiled in derision, as if she could care for the master of a workshop when she was nearly married to a gentleman.

"I am sorry you think about me," she said, to soften him. "I thought we were friends merely, just as you might be with any other girl. I always thought you cared most for Susan Brooks or Emily White."

"Emily White," he said, impatiently. "What is she or Susan to me? Susan belongs to Bill, and Emily White might go to Jericho for me. I wanted you, Fanny, and you only. You know that very well."

"I am very sorry, Fred. I am, indeed."

"What's the use of being sorry? Why not give up thinking of Mr. Percy? I would look over it even now."

"Thank you," she said, sarcastically. "I don't think I shall require your forgiveness. I am my own mistress, Mr. Crosby. You can make mischief at home if you like. I shall leave if you do, that's all."

"As if I would," he said, reproachfully. "They shall not hear a word from me. But I will save you if I can, in spite of yourself."

"That means that you will play the spy."

"No; but I will talk to Mr. Percy."

"And be discharged," she snarled.

"I intend to discharge myself, so that I may talk to him," he replied, with a resolved composure that alarmed her. "I have a good character, Fanny, and there's plenty of work in London. There's my father's shop at any rate—so I am quite independent of Falkland. He shall know what I think of him."

"And if you say a word to him, I will never speak to you again. How can you be so mean, so ungenerous? I am ashamed of you!"

"I hope you will never have reason to be ashamed of yourself," he said, with a sigh, and then Fanny took her hand from his arm. They were at her father's door, and she went in without saying good night.

"Where's Fred?" asked her father.

"Outside. I hope he will stay there."

"The lad is a little wrong to-night," said West; "but I believe it's your fault. You shouldn't play with a good heart, my girl."

"I don't want him nor his heart either."

Fanny, like too many young ladies of her kind, did not show the most amiable side of her character at home. She went straight upstairs, and did not come down again.

"Never mind her," said West. "Come in, my boy. You will make it up to-morrow."

To his surprise Fred Crosby stood in the doorway with his face towards the street, and the sleeve of his jacket to his eyes.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the carpenter, readily touched at the sight of sorrow. "She will be all right by-and-by."

"Not she," said Fred, dashing his tears away. "I was first a fool to be played with when she had nobody else, and now I care nothing."

"Come in," coaxed West. "I will bring her down."

"It's no use. I have seen more to-day than I shall forget in twenty years. I don't care for anything. I am just about broken down, and don't care what becomes of me."

He strode away almost sobbing. Old Bill West followed, trying to persuade him to go in; but Fred went straight to his lodging, and had his simple grief out by himself. He sat nearly all night with his elbows on his knees and his chin between his hands, smoking

a pipe rather for the sake of having something to grind between his teeth than for solace. He went to work in the morning, and was regular throughout the week, but on the Saturday he gave warning.

Two days before his time was up Fanny disappeared, leaving a note behind to say that she was married and with her husband, but she could not give his name yet. They were not to make any attempt to follow or find her; it would be useless, and only have the effect of sending her further away.

There were wretched days of search and wretched weeks of anxiety at the house in Falkland-row. The carpenter was bowed with shame and sorrow; his wife wept bitterly night after night, and both surmised the worst. Fanny was their pride—their pet. They said they could never look honest people in the face again. Young Bill West swore that if he ever found the villain he would have his life.

Fred Crosby did not say a word when he heard of it. A savage calmness seemed to settle on his face, and he registered a mental threat against somebody. He shook hands with his mates and Old Bill West at pay-time on the last day of his stay at Falkland's yard.

"She may as well be gone for ever as for a day," he said to the foreman; "but still I will find her for you, Mr. West. Whoever has taken her away shall do her justice."

CHAPTER V.

SURMISES.

Fred Crosby was an altered man from the time of Fanny's disappearance. He grew reckless, and would absent himself for days from his lodging; he drank hard, and broke into the little store of money he had saved when he thought Miss West would marry him.

He did not attempt to get work for a week or more, but hung about Falkland's yard way-laying Percy, watching and following him, in the hope of finding out where Fanny was. Fred had no doubt that the girl was with the builder's son; but he could not discover the hiding-place.

Percy baffled him. He was on his guard against Fred, and led him many an unsuccessful chase. He generally went away in a cab, and for a few times Fred followed him in another. But the content did not last; the young carpenter proved it too expensive. The rich man found it easy to defeat the poor one when money was the only weapon necessary.

Percy was very kind to old Bill West, sympathized with him most feelingly, and offered to assist him in the search. West was touched to the heart by his daughter's conduct. He had to endure the sneers of uncharitable neighbours, who said "it was just what they expected. Girls who went flouncing about dressed out in that way were sure to come to harm. They were not a bit surprised. It all came of poor men putting high notions into their children's heads," &c.

"Five-and-twenty years," said the carpenter, with much emotion, "have I held up my head in Falkland-row, working hard to bring up my family honestly, and giving them—me and missus too—the best example. It was a cruel thing whoever did this wrong to a poor man's child, and I hope the Lord will punish him."

Falkland winced at that. The rough old man's solemn wish fell upon him like a cloud, and he was troubled by remorse.

"But how do you know she has been wronged?" asked Percy. "Did she not say she was married?"

"Yes, she said so; but if it's true why don't she bring her husband home, if she is not ashamed of him? No, sir; she's a wretched lost girl, and the man who has misled her so is a rascal—a cruel rascal. Don't you think he must be?"

"Well, if it is as you think, he must be," said Percy, seriously. "But my own opinion is that your daughter is too good a girl to have fallen into error."

Old Bill shook his head.

"Do you ever hear from her?" Falkland inquired.

"The other day a letter came, telling us she was happy, and we were not to fret about her. She sent us a five-pound note, with her love; and there it is put away, because we could not send it back, she putting no address, you see, sir. Where's she to get five-pound notes, if she comes by them properly?"

"From her husband, I should say."

"He'd have to be a rich man to give her five-pound notes to send home. And what rich man would marry a child of mine? If he is all right, why don't he come forward like a man, instead of stealing her away like a sneaking thief? I wish I could find him. Old as I am I would break every bone in his body, if I got six months for it!"

"Six months would be a very moderate punishment for breaking every bone in a man's body," said Percy, with a suppressed smile. "I should not judge too hastily if I were you, Mr. West. Take the girl's word, and believe the best. There may be circumstances that prevent the acknowledgment of his marriage."

"Then it ought not to have taken place—if it has taken place. How can she be happy if her husband is ashamed to own her?"

"Yours is the hard matter-of-fact view, Mr. West. Young people do strange things, you know, for love is not the wisest teacher in the world. Now, I have a friend who has married a poor girl—just such a girl as Fanny."

"And run away with her?"

"Yes. And he will be obliged to keep it secret till his father dies, for fear of being disinherited."

"More shame for him. It's a pretty thing for a young gentleman to marry and be wishing for his father to die. It's sinful, I call it!"

"My friend does not wish for his father to die," said Percy, provoked into a smile at West's sturdy obstinacy. "It is only a matter of prudence to keep the secret."

"Is it a matter of prudence to give the poor girl's mother and father the heart-ache, make her little sisters cry about her, and her brothers ashamed of her? I am a poor man and a plain one, Mr. Percy, and perhaps I give offence, but to me it seems a wicked thing."

"There may be no wicked intention, West."

"But then it is, intention whether or not. Look at our case, and what it has done for us. All the gossips in the street point at me coming out and going in. I am ten years older in a month than I was, and my misus has got no heart for anything."

"I am sorry for you, West," said the young man, sincerely; "but I must say you take it too heavily. You had better believe the best. Accept my view of it, and wait for the day to come when she can tell the truth."

The old man only shook his head in reply. He could not see anything to hope for.

Percy was sorry for him. In the first glow of his own happiness he could feel for the misery he caused the workman, though he wondered at West taking it to heart so keenly.

"One would think such people would be satisfied with the knowledge that she is well and happy," he meditated. "I thought the five-pound note would set them at rest, with the hope of more."

He smiled then, as if greatly amused.

"Virtuous poverty is not all stage clap-trap, it seems. This sturdy old Briton is as honest as the most conventional lover of honesty could wish. But what a father-in-law, if ever I have to make myself known!"

The builder's son had plenty of liberty. He was allowed town apartments, and a liberal income. The elder Mr. Falkland was satisfied if he saw his son and heir at the family residence near Penge once or twice a week. Percy pleaded the necessity of study and the facilities offered by the metropolitan societies. As he displayed continual improvement Mr. Falkland was contented.

A cab took Percy from the yard to a pretty semi-detached villa near St. John's-wood. Fred Crosby was, as usual, on his track. He was

leaning against a lamp-post with his hands in his pockets, and he scowled bitterly at his late master's son. Percy gave him a moment's regretful thought. He knew the cause of the change in the young carpenter. Fred had been dissipated and revolutionary ever since Fanny's disappearance. He hated the rich with all his might, talked of them as the oppressors and destroyers of the poor, and would have made one in any wild republican scheme for the abolition of things in general and the reign of the people.

Fanny sat at the window watching for her husband. He had taken every precaution to prevent discovery, and they lived there as Mr. and Mrs. Percy. They were very happy as yet. Fanny knew nothing of the sorrow at home. Falkland made up pleasant fictitious conversations, which he related to her as having taken place between himself and her father. He represented that the old man was perfectly at peace concerning her, that he accepted his explanation, and believed all would come well in the end.

The villa was luxuriously furnished. There were books and music, and works of art—everything to cultivate the inherent taste of the workman's daughter. She spent her time wisely when Percy was absent; taught herself to speak with purity and elegance, to play and sing, so that she might be fit for her position when the time came that he could acknowledge her.

She rose to open the door for him; met him with a kiss of welcome, and they went into the drawing-room hand in hand. Percy had been a better man since he married. He lost the taste for the wild and questionable pleasures with which he had passed away his evenings before. He could not quite keep from them; but Fanny was in blissful ignorance of the fact that the fair young husband whom she so adored passed many an hour in reckless dissipation when she thought he was at Penge. She had unbounded faith in him; the first seeds of distrust were not yet sown.

One old uncomfortable proverb was falsified in his case. He had married—urged by passion into haste—but repentance did not come. Had Fanny been less sensible they would have been wretched; but she made herself a companion for him. He could converse with her, and not be wearied by a tedious ignorance or want of sympathy. She cultivated tastes that assimilated with his own; was careful to suppress those that he considered reprehensible in any degree.

There were little errors of speech to be corrected, slight solecisms that offended his ear, and he taught her to avoid them. She was a willing scholar. Love made him a gentle monitor, her a gentle pupil.

He found that the tie did not fetter him, and so he never worried. He never saw her brow clouded; never heard her tone complaining. He came and went when he chose, and she let him go in perfect faith; welcomed him with pleasure. Sometimes, when he looked into the future, he was eager for the coming of the day when he could claim her before the world. The only unpleasant things in the background were the carpenter father, the not over-refined mother, the carpenter brother, the boy at the chessmonger's, and the boy giving away handbills at the cheap clothier's. Percy contemplated with horror the possibility of running against a juvenile brother-in-law with a basket of eggs and butter on his back.

"I might find something better for them to do," he thought, when the remembrance troubled him. "But there is plenty of time to think of it. The future can be left to take care of itself."

The fear of being found out lessened as time wore on. He grew more careless, and took Fanny about with less reserve. Occasionally he was seen with her by his acquaintance, and they rallied him about her, putting their own evil constructions on the association. He had to laugh with them, and so accept the unmanly imputation that disgraced him.

Fanny knew nothing of these things. She

had the villa for her home, and only Percy for company. Her resources were her books, her music, and the small conservatory that was exquisitely filled. There were times when she longed to see her parents, and the old place in Falkland-row, when she pictured the familiar tea-table, with all its loving associations, and wished herself with them. But she had to check the wish for Percy's sake.

There was one haunting fear—the hour of approaching separation. The time was drawing near for Percy to start for the German borders with his gang of artisans, to carry out the contract undertaken by his father. He had hinted at attempting to smuggle her over with him; but recently he had grown cool upon his own projection—there was the risk, he said.

(To be continued.)

SWEETEST AND BEST.

CHAPTER I.

"THAT boy is perfectly infatuated with the little witch over there in the home cottage."

"And have you just opened your eyes to the fact?" asked the white-haired woman, looking up from her work.

Philip Halstead, a retired merchant, and the richest landowner in Silverdale, did not immediately reply, but kept on drumming on the window-pane, as he gazed off across the stretch of low meadow, through whose tall grasses a manly form was threading its way.

"Mary," finally said he, turning toward the other, "I wonder what our boy can possibly see in that girl to admire?"

"Eh?" responded Mrs. Halstead.

"What is there about her that is attractive?" he asked.

"She is very pretty," replied the other.

"Not more so than a dozen other women of his acquaintance."

"She is full of life, has a firm, loving nature, and —" faltered the lady.

"Well, what other attraction does she possess?" impatiently asked Mr. Halstead.

"She possesses the attraction of straitened circumstances, backed up by a good name and plenty of beauty," returned the white-haired wife and mother.

"Humph! a poor showing, I think. Confound —. But no matter—the boy's a fool!"

And Philip went out of the room, to find consolation in giving orders to some men at work on the farm.

All the long dreary winter through handsome Fred Halstead had been cooped up in college.

His heart had yearned more times than once for the snow-bound woods adjoining his father's estate. He had pictured to himself the jolly times he would have when cold-gate walls and dry, dusty studies should be cast aside.

He is home finally—has been for a period of two or three weeks.

He has found an attraction to console him for the dullness at home at a little old-fashioned cottage.

Some women are born to command, not by the right and power of royal gift or rich endowment of fortune, but by the beauty which God and nature bestow in place of royalty or wealth.

Beatrice Barton, or Trixy as she is called, was a lovely little darling when she trotted to school but a few years ago. She is beautiful now, as she sits by Fred's side under an elm, listening to his stories of college fun and duty.

Fred has met many fair women during his period of twenty-two years of life. He has flirted with many women—as some men will—and now he both respects and admires, as well as loves, this beautiful girl whose eyes have never gazed upon the stir of city life.

The days pass on, and Fred takes his way every afternoon across the meadow.

At last the time comes for his return to college, and just a week prior to that event

Fred comes to his mother, as she is seated in the lawn leading to the lovely garden. He tells her something which sends the blood to her face in a warm tide, and then recedes, leaving the face white and pain-stricken.

"Fred, Fred, how could you? Your father—"

"Mother, something tells me that all will be well in the end. He does not know her true, sweet nature. Some day he will, and then—it will be all right. Don't worry, little mother."

"Father will learn my darling's goodness; I feel it here," and he laid his hand upon his heart.

The eve of Fred's departure arrived. His father was seated in the library, awaiting his son's return.

"At this very moment I suppose they are swearing undying affection. I'll put a stop to the whole business," mused the old gentleman.

A half-hour passed, and the door was opened and the culprit entered. His face is yet aglow with joy, his eyes are still bright with the light of bliss. He takes a seat near his father, and awaits for the latter to speak.

"In the morning you return, Frederick?"

"Yes, father," demurely said Fred. He knew for what this interview had been called, and he was determined to be calm.

"Do you leave behind you any tender attachment, my boy?"

"Eh?"

"Do you go back to your books heart free?" coolly asked Mr. Halstead, as he carefully searched the other's features with absorbing eyes.

"Well—that is, I—" hesitated Fred, casting his eyes down.

"Don't get confused, my lad; it is a bad sign and a half confession. Tell me frankly, are you engaged to the girl over the meadow?"

Fred did not reply.

"You say nothing, my boy. What does it mean?—what—O, Fred, Fred, I hope you are not a base scoundrel to betray—"

"Stop, father," exclaimed Fred, springing to his feet; "that girl is the sweetest and best woman man ever gazed upon. Could I betray her? am I not your son?"

"Bless you, Fred! I feel you are my son, and I know you are a true fellow. One thing more."

"Well, I listen."

"Promise me that you will never look upon Trixy Barton's face again."

"A strange wish, father."

"I have other views for you, my boy. Beside, there are other women, fair, beautiful, more worthy."

"Of that we will not speak," interrupted Fred.

"Some other time then, my son; but you do not promise."

"Well, since you will have it, I"—Fred thought a minute—"I promise never to look upon the face of Trixy Barton again."

"Bless you, Fred. I know you will be cured of this foolish fancy when you come back from your books again," rapturously exclaimed Mr. Halstead, grasping his son's hand and shaking it warmly.

CHAPTER II.

In the morning Fred went back to the college, and the two old people were lonely without the merry laugh and bright face of their boy.

A month passed, and one day one of the farm hands came running to Mrs. Halstead and told her that the master had been thrown from his horse. The door is pushed open, and two of the men enter, bearing between them the inanimate form of their master.

A broken limb is the most serious of Mr. Halstead's injuries. He is fretful for days and nights, and the patient wife is well-nigh worn out. He will not let her send word of the accident to Fred, for he says it will only break up the boy's studies.

A slight girlish form comes across the meadows one morning, and walks to the front door of the mansion.

"Can I see Mrs. Halstead?"

"Step in. Who shall I say it is?" asked the servant, as she ushered the visitor into the hall.

"Trixy Barton, please."

Trixy is shown into the beautifully furnished room.

"Child, sit down here by me. Now what can I do for you, my dear?"

"Can I help you in any way, Mrs.—Mrs.—Halstead? Mother sent me to ask," shyly said Trixy.

"Why, you little dear, what could you do?"

"Mother said that people with broken bones are fretful; that they grow tired quite easily. She said I might offer to help you to please and comfort Mr. Halstead."

The old lady kissed her and promised to avail herself of her offer if she could. Mr. Halstead needed no little persuasion, but in the end charmed by her sweet face, he asked her very graciously to come and read to him if she could spare the time. This was the very thing Trixy desired. She had intended to extend her assistance to him; and he has invited her.

"O, I would like it very much, I assure you."

So it was settled.

How Trixy's bright face cheered the old man's hours of care and pain. How her soft voice filled his heart with peace and eased his trouble away, as she read and sung to him.

"Mary," said he, one morning, as he was seated in the library with his limb resting upon a chair, "I'm about well now, and—and I'm just the least bit sorry."

"Sorry? what an idea! Why?" returned the old lady.

"The little girl, Trixy, will be needed no longer when I can help myself."

"That's it?"

"Yes, so you know I wish I could keep her here always."

"But it would not do," said his wife, watching him furtively the while.

"Why not?"

"Fred, you know."

"Yes; Fred used to go over the meadow, I remember."

No more was said upon the subject. Wednesday arrived, and Fred also.

"Fred, I want to say something to you," said his father, as the young fellow helped his father to the couch.

"Very well, I am all ears."

"Did you meet any prettier girl than Trixy while you were away?"

"No."

"Do you still hold to your promise not to look upon the face of Trixy Barton again?"

asked his father.

"I do."

"I'm sorry, my boy—I'm very sorry."

"Why?" asked Fred.

"Because I have learned that she is a jewel. I would like to have her sweet face near me; her dear presence would bring a charm to the house. But, oh—well, if it cannot be, I suppose it cannot."

"I cannot bring Trixy Barton to your home, father. When I promised not to look upon the face of Trixy again—Trixy Barton, I mean—I intended to keep that promise. Good-morning," and with these words Fred went out.

A half hour passed; the door opened, and Fred, with Trixy upon his arm, came in. Behind him appeared Fred's mother.

"Fred, you said—"

"Precisely, father. I said I would not look upon Trixy Barton's face again. When I left for college she was Trixy Halstead."

"And you—did you know?" asked the astonished man of his wife.

"Forgive me, Philip—I knew all."

It was easy work now to reconcile him to the little deception, since he had come to believe that of all the girls Fred could have married Trixy was undoubtedly the "sweetest and best."

J. M. S.

TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

CHAPTER XXVII. (continued.)

As Loobiala and Hyacinth started forward slowly, she said, "I could not, you know—I could not prevent Gwendolen coming here. She used to think that there was nothing more between you and me than the old tie, but latterly—you know it too, Errol—she has been growing jealous of me, and so if I had tried to dissuade her from meeting you she would have been the more determined."

"My child," interrupted Loobiala, "spare your generous nature, as I will strive to do. It is all to me an open book, and the reading of it is cruel pain. Ah! Hyacinth, Hyacinth, no deeper shame can a woman feel for one of her own sex who stoops from womanly dignity than a man feels who reverences truly noble womanhood. And it is not even for love that Gwendolen so humbles herself. Heavens!" he said, under his breath, "could no one stand between her and such shame?"

Hyacinth's head was bowed; she spoke after a pause, in a subdued voice, almost as if the shame had been hers,—

"Louis would have stayed her if he could, Errol. His passion was terrible when he knew she was coming, but she would not have heeded him. I prayed him not to speak harshly to her, for I knew it would be useless, and only make misery and division."

"You did right, Hyacinth. Poor Gwendolen! she has imagined that I stood between her and Hazlemere, and threw you in his way because I grudged him the love I had discarded, yet still—she tried to think—cherished. She has thought that for her sake I came to London, or she had tried so to think; yet her heart misgives her and she fears you. Hyacinth, tell me, has she showed that jealousy to you in any marked manner?"

"No, Errol; but I can see and feel it."

Loobiala set his teeth, and his hand closed more tightly over that he held. He did not speak for some moments; when he did it was to turn to another subject, though more closely connected with this than Hyacinth was aware.

"Sweetheart, how is it with Louis and you?"

The girl flushed deeply.

"I shall never go back to Stanhope Lea," she said, in a low voice.

"No, by heaven!" said the Earl, so emphatically, that she looked at him startled, then he added, "But Louis, has he—"

"No, no. Ah! Errol," the tears rushed to her eyes, "he is so changed—so ill. And I think, perhaps, he knows I do not love him as he would wish; and then, feeling he cannot live, he would not speak. Poor Louis! it seems so cruel to leave him, and he does not know that I must do it, Errol."

"He does not know it?"

"No, it was Aunt Philippa who spoke to me and charged me with trifling with Louis."

"By Jove! Let me know all, Hyacinth."

And Hyacinth told him, keeping back nothing what had passed between herself and Miss Philippa.

He listened without interruption, though his face grew very stern again at the insult to Hyacinth; and when she ceased, he said quietly,—

"It is best so, my child, best so for all reasons. Have you thought, then, what you mean to do?"

"I can live alone, Errol—at least, with a companion. But how can I tell Louis that I must leave Stanhope Lea, for I cannot tell him why; and I should not like to go abroad while he is in such ill-health?"

"Still, whatever comes, you must not return to Stanhope Lea at all," said Loobiala. "It will be a shock to Louis to learn how it was that you were driven from his house; but there is no help for it. Ah! my heart, if I could but act for you—if I could but take the part which should be mine. Will it ever be in my power to be just to you?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DREAM, OR A TERRIBLE REALITY?

"Just to me, Errol? You must not talk of justice, for you do not wrong me."

The Earl lifted his dark eyes to the sweet face bent down to him, and his look was full of pain, and her's of pleading tenderness.

"My soul!" he said, passionately, "do not tempt me to remember only that to your love there is no dishonour, and to forget—not the shame—that can never be, but that it is a gulf between us that can not be spanned."

"I would make you forget it if I could, Errol," said the girl, steadily.

"Hush!" he turned aside his face. "Have I not to fight my own heart? Spare me, Hyacinth."

"Forgive me!" She said no more then, but the light sprang into her eyes, and almost a smile came over the crimson lips. He feared her then; when the crisis came she would not plead in vain.

In a few moments he had gained self-command, and spoke in his usual manner.

"Hyacinth, I think it would be best to write to Miss Philippa such a letter as she can show to Louis; telling her formally what step you have decided to take. At the same time tell Gwendolen also."

"When shall I write the letter, Errol?"

"In two or three days from now, my child."

By this time they had reached the end of the village, and arrived at the principal inn, where they found and were received "with effusion" by the rest of the party; and even Gwendolen smiled and congratulated them on having escaped the rain; but the mask she wore was not a mask to two among the riders, and one of those two said in his heart,—

"Thank Heaven! my darling will no more share Gwendolen Stanhope's home."

"It was unfortunate," said Gwendolen to her cousin, riding up to her as the party turned back towards Bramblemere, "that Lenore should cast a shoe. Had Mac Jan charge of her?"

Hyacinth refused to read the innuendo of this question; she answered quickly,—

"Of course not. Emma's own groom attended to her. If Jan had seen to her the accident would not have happened."

"Of course not, dear; but 'tis a pity it did happen. I am sure the Duke of Merivale thought it was no accident at all."

"And I am certain," said Hyacinth, turning and looking full in her cousin's face, "that the Duke of Merivale, being a true gentleman, had no such thought, and gave you no cause to suppose he had."

Gwendolen coloured scarlet; but as Hyacinth, after speaking those deliberate words, turned away, her cousin leaned towards her and said in a whisper,—

"You remember what I once told you, Hyacinth, about Lochisla?"

"Gwendolen, hush! For your own sake do not recall such words."

"Why not? He was vowed to me; and I am mine still."

Hyacinth made no answer, she did not even look into Gwendolen's face, but shook her rein and rode on. Her heart sank within her with the terror of what Gwendolen might do or say fatally compromising to her womanly dignity.

She had no thought for herself or idea of any melodramatic revenge on Gwendolen's part; and, indeed, believed it probable that this fit of jealousy would pass away—for a time at any rate—as others had done. And she was not mistaken. An hour later Gwendolen was sincerely cordial to her cousin, and seemed anxious to atone for the bitter speeches she had made; and after luncheon she was Hyacinth's partner at lawn-tennis.

She was strangely capricious, the girl thought; but Lochisla watched her keenly, though covertly, and when the dressing-bell rang he walked by her side into the house, and talked to her, or rather made her talk, all the way.

"Lord Lochisla, you do not deserve that I should bid you good-night. Why must you go to the library now? We would let you off for half an hour in the day time."

So spoke Lady Loring.

The Earl answered smiling,—

"Half-an-hour would not do, nor an hour. Dear Lady Loring, you forget that to a soldier a night's rest is a luxury, not a necessity. I have many a time sat up all night when I might have rested if I would."

"Well, you don't look the worse for it, I admit. Studying at ghastly hours agrees with you, I suppose; so I will forgive you and say good-night."

Hyacinth standing near heard, and her heart was troubled. What was it that weighed specially on Lochisla just now? Why was it he could not rest?

It was long before sleep visited her own eyes; the shadows seemed drawing closer and closer round her, and her thoughts dwelt sorrowfully with the solitary man in the great sombre library, alone in the vast silence of the deep night, alone with the crowding phantoms of years of bitter suffering—alone with a grief of which she knew not, but saw only its black shadow; ay, alone with a thought of dread and horror that she knew not of—a thought that grew and grew till it seemed almost to take tangible shape, and to glare at him from the gloom.

It was long past midnight. Errol Cameron paced slowly up and down the wide room, his arms folded on his breast, his lips white and set, his dark, brilliant eyes gazing straight before him into space. No book lay on the table. He was studying a terrible book, not written on paper or parchment—a book whose language he only and one other could read, and that other was far away.

And there was not a sound; his light foot-fall could not have been heard by any one in the room on the velvet-pile carpet; all in the household, save himself, slept, and without there was not even a breeze to stir the boughs of the trees, not even the hoot of the night owls, or the beat of a bat's wing against the glass. All was still—the deathly, awful stillness of night in the country.

Once he sat down, leaning his burning forehead on his hands; but ere long he had risen again, and resumed his walk, pausing with almost a start when the clock in the turret near struck two, and the gilded ormolu on the mantel-piece took up the tale in silvery chimes. Only two o'clock! It seemed as if he had been here for hours—long hours of agony!

"Am I powerless?" his heart cried out, over and over, though no word passed his lips—"powerless to avert this doom, or is it too late? Mother of Heaven! thou knowest how I have striven, and yet to me it would be freedom, honour, love, all—all! Ah! Heaven, for one moment if only a dream—one moment to know Errol Cameron's name once more held in honour, to face the world free from the brand of shame—to blot out from my brain words that are written there in letters of fire! Is it just that I should suffer—that a spotless name should be degraded to the dust for a sin not mine? Father in Heaven! save me from this anguish, from the thought that her doom would be my release!"

Hark! what was that sound without—so slight that an ear less quick, less schooled, might not have heeded it, but the soldier turned towards the door instinctively. Was it a step in the polished gallery? He heard it again, even as the question flashed through his mind, and ere he had reached the door it was dashed open, and with a low cry, half terror, half frantic joy, Hyacinth Vernon threw herself into his arms.

"Eternal Heaven!" burst from him, as he wrapped the quivering, convulsed form to his breast; and the awful dread of days and weeks sprang into strong, fierce life.

Not whiter was the face of the trembling

girl than Errol Cameron's, as with a quick movement he shut and locked the door, and he held the girl to him with a speechless passion of thankfulness that she wist not of. She was white and wild with a terror that no mortal being could have caused, and clung to her lover as in the horror of the supernatural clinging to the living heart that beats for us, seek the warm clasp of mortal hands, and the embrace of the strong, protecting human love. She had evidently fled from her chamber in the haste of an overmastering fear—a fear so great that it had beaten down all thought, and left only the blind instinct to fly to the man who loved her. She had either been lying down, not having yet retired to her sleeping room, or had had time to don extra apparel, for she was clothed in a long blue cashmere morning-gown, and had slippers on her feet; but Lochisla could not, for some moments, ask her a single question, so terrible was her agitation; he could only hold her to him and tenderly caress the golden head, and whisper soothing words to her.

"My heart, my own darling! fear nothing—no harm can reach thee here; in my arms thou art safe, thou knowest it, Hyacinth—my life, my treasure."

She lifted her face at last, and looked up to him with a look of perfect love and trust, and tried to speak; then a sudden tremor shook her, and she gave a scared, wild glance round as if fearing to see some dreadful shape. Racked to the soul, Lochisla yet retained outward calm, and seeing that Hyacinth had sustained a severe shock he still only sought to soothe her, and would not even suffer her to speak until her mind had regained its equilibrium.

"My child," he said, softly, "there is nothing here—nothing but thou and me. Nay, I can wait for a little while to hear what has happened. It is no light thing, I know, that would so frighten my brave Hyacinth. Rest here, dear one."

He placed her gently on a low couch, and turning aside, poured a little water into a glass from a decanter that stood near at hand. She drank it obediently, even eagerly, and whispered,—

"Thanks, Errol," gratefully.

Then as he sat down by her and drew her to him again, she nestled to his breast, and after a minute or two her breathing grew more tranquil, and the frightened look almost died out of her eyes. She struggled hard for composure—she never forgot in her extremest agony how anxious Errol Cameron must be.

"Errol," she said at length, lifting her face, "I can tell you now—you have been so patient—and you will think me so foolish!"

"Could I be impatient with thee, Hyacinth?" answered Lochisla, kissing the white brow, "and I know thee too well to believe thee guilty of folly. Tell me what made thee fly to me in such fear."

"It was no dream, Errol. I had not gone to bed, but had laid down on a couch in my dressing-room as I am, and I never slept. I was thinking—thinking of so many things that I could not sleep, and I had for the time forgotten the legend of the lady who they say is seen at times, and who tried to murder her rival; so there was nothing to excite my fancy at all. There was no light in the room, and I could only see things dimly. Suddenly I felt a strange impression that I was not alone. I looked towards the door, and, Errol, there was a white figure there—in the room. I had not heard the door open—"

"A white figure—a woman's?" said Lochisla, under his breath.

"Yes, a woman's—I could not see the face; there was something white, like a wimple, over the head, and she had on a long white robe that might have been a nightdress, or anything—it was too dark to see distinctly. She did not walk upright, but half-crouching, and crept slowly round the edge of the room towards the bed room door." As she spoke, shuddering once more in speaking of those horrible moments, Lochisla strained her yet

clearer to him, and the cold drops stood on his brow as he bent over her. Dreaming, ah, no! This was a terrible reality!

"Gee, on," he said, hoarsely, "it was no dream indeed, my darling."

"Then," Hyacinth went on, a little wondering at his words, "the legend flashed back on my mind; it must be the Lady Loring, acting out her crime. I did not move; I lay still and watched her. I tried to think it might be a trick, but who in this house would play such a trick? The way the figure moved made me think of a tiger creeping on its prey. I thought—with a strange kind of calmness—what it was it meant to do; and I wondered if when it reached the inner room, if it did so without seeing me, whether I should be able to get to the door before it had discovered that the inner room was empty; and I wondered if it should see me whether it would have power to kill me; but I never removed my eyes from the figure. It passed on in the same manner, making no sound, and vanished into the bedroom. Then I was on my feet, and made for the door, and just as I reached it, I looked back; and oh! Errol, the figure was behind me, just on the threshold of the inner door—and it sprang forwards—"

She hid her face with a quick sob, shivering from head to foot, and while Lochisla comforted her, his heart was full of stern passion, and he swore by all holy things that, at whatever cost, never should Hyacinth incur again the possibility of this night's peril and fear.

"Were you coming to me from the beginning, heart's dearest?" he whispered.

"Yes, Errol. I never thought of anyone else but you. I knew you were here. I seemed to fly along the corridor, and the figure followed, with its arm uplifted; it never got close—and when I reached the foot of the stairs at the end, I looked back again, and did not see it—it had vanished." She paused, gazing at him earnestly, and added, "It could not have been a human being, Errol—tell me what you think."

"My child, I scarce know what to think. You know I do not doubt that the dead can sometimes revisit the earth. Yet it might be that some servant in the household, taking advantage of the legend, came to your room for robbery."

"But the jewels are in my dressing-room. And then, a thief would not have pursued me; she would have secured the jewels when I left the room."

"True. Still this must be inquired into."

He paused for a moment, and she, exhausted rather than weary, leaned her head against him again, thinking that, deeply moved as he was, he showed little surprise, while his questions seemed to point to suspicion of some living agent.

"Hyacinth," he said, presently, "you can treat your maid?"

"Julie? Oh! Errol, yes. She is as faithful as gold; she might have robbed me a hundred times. Besides, I have had proofs of her goodness."

"That is well. Now, my darling, will you let me leave you for three minutes?—it shall be no longer, Hyacinth," as involuntarily she clung closer to him. The girl drew back at once, lifting her head quickly.

"Forgive me; I am weak and fearful."

"Hyacinth, you are strong and brave; a weaker woman would have fainted at my feet. Only a few minutes, sweetheart." He kissed her tenderly, released her, and rising, quitted the room.

In less than the three minutes Hyacinth heard a quick light step again, and he re-entered the library, locking the door as before. She sprang to meet him.

"Dear one," he said, putting his arm about her, "were you afraid to be alone? No wonder, after what you have passed through."

"Where did you go, Errol?"

"To see if there was any one lurking about. You see, my Hyacinth, this creature, whether

living woman or spirit, pursued you with a malignant purpose; and so I cannot yield up all idea of mortal agency until I have satisfied myself that no tangible being is responsible for what has happened. Sweetheart, though a Highlander, I am tried soldier too, and twice your age, and so more sceptical."

"But, Errol, you will not say anything to Lady Loring?"

"I must think what is best to do, Hyacinth. Leave it to me, and, meanwhile, say nothing to anyone. If I find it needful to speak of it I shall, of course, only tell part of the truth; that you saw a figure in your room, which presently disappeared, and that next day you told me of it. Now, my child, tell me, if you know, who sleeps in the same corridor in which your rooms are situated?"

"Gwendolen and Julie, and, quite at the other end, nearest the east wing, Clarice Loring."

"No one else, you are certain?"

"Quite certain. There are only two other suites of rooms, and they are empty, and one small room opposite mine, where Julie sleeps."

A sudden light, like a flash, sprang into Lochisla's eyes, but Hyacinth did not see it; she was not looking at him. The girl added, with a slight shudder,—

"I shall have Julie to sleep in my room henceforth. I should never sleep at all if I were alone."

"Best s'. And, Hyacinth, will you do this, lock your door every night?"

"Errol! You cannot really think—"

"I know not what to think, my heart; but you will do what I ask?"

"Yes, Errol."

"Fear for you makes me a tyrant, Hyacinth," he said, half wistfully.

The girl raised her eyes with a quick look of pain.

"I had no thought to oppose your wish; you know it," she said.

"Verily, yes, sweet one; so meek to me, so self-reliant, when alone," he said, caressing the soft curls.

"Not self-reliant to-night, Errol. Oh! I need not go back yet—not yet."

"Nay, darling; stay with me till daylight—it is not far off—and then thou wilt not fear."

He led her to the couch again, and as he drew her to his side, he bade her try to sleep, but she shook her head, though she closed her eyes and sat quite silent, resting against him, while he, silent too, thought out his course of action for the immediate future.

And the dawn came creeping up—the blessed morning light—and Hyacinth lifted her blue eyes to the sky, and watched the creeping brightness for some moments, then raised herself.

"Errol, I will go back now."

"I will go with you, sweetheart, to the entrance of the corridor," said Lochisla, as they rose.

He folded her to him and kissed her brow and lips, then led her from the room, and noiselessly they traversed the long passage and the wide stairs. At the entrance to the corridor he left her with only a parting hand-clasp, and whispered "adieu." But he watched her till she vanished into her apartment, and even then he paused, listening for some minutes; but all was as silent as the grave, and, turning away, he sought his own apartments, which were at some little distance from this spot.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHAT DID THE QUESTION HER?

BREAKFAST at Bramblemore was on the table from eight to ten, and the early party always included Lord Lochisla, Hyacinth, Gwendolen, Lady Loring, and the Duke of Merivale; not that the latter loved early rising, but he would have arisen at sunrise if thereby he could have enjoyed a longer period of Hyacinth's society. This morning the party was not augmented, for though the three expected guests had arrived the day before none of them had put in an appearance.

Hyacinth was the first in the room after Lochisla, and as he came forward to greet her he looked keenly and anxiously into her face.

"I think I am myself again," she said, smiling, "or quite enough so to wear all outward seeming to any one but you."

"Yes, you will do, sweetheart." He dropped her hand as steps were heard without, and Lady Loring and the Duke of Merivale entered together.

"Gwendolen is late this morning," remarked the hostess, when they were all seated. "Had she a bad night, do you know, Hyacinth?"

"I have not seen her, Lady Loring. I suppose she was tired."

Just then the letters were brought in, and included one for Hyacinth from Louis. A shiver fell on her brow as she read. He wrote from Stanhope Lea; the journey, short though it was, had tired him. Nevertheless, he wrote cheerfully, though he admitted that he was lying down.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Lochisla, who sat next her, in a low voice.

"I don't know, Count Errol—not good news. I think Louis is not as well as he makes out," and she gave Louis's letter into his hand.

It flashed through the Earl's mind how little Louis Stanhope would like to think that his letter to Hyacinth was being read by Errol Cameron, of all men.

"I agree with you," he said, returning the letter. "Is he alone at the Lea?"

"Only Aunt Philippa is with him; but if he gets much worse, I must go back."

But the Earl did not answer this, and Hyacinth saw that he did not endorse it. She was puzzled. Errol could never wish her to leave Louis if he were really ill or dying.

At nine o'clock Gwendolen entered the room. Lochisla at the moment was standing near one of the windows talking to Lady Loring, and he turned and glanced at the fair face on which the light poured full and clear.

Only a glance, but that brief scrutiny almost satisfied him—almost, not quite.

Hyacinth was nearest to Gwendolen, and Gwendolen kissed her affectionately; then Lady Loring came forward and "hoped she had had a good night's rest, for she was usually one of the early birds."

"Yes, I slept well, thanks, when I did sleep," Miss Stanhope answered, smiling; "but I had a wakeful fit, and that made me sleep late."

Lochisla heard the answer, and as Gwendolen gave him her hand, he said, courteously,—

"You look languid now, Miss Stanhope, perhaps the morning's ride yesterday tired you?"

"Oh, no—not at all; I think I must look more languid than I feel."

Another quick, keen look from those penetrating dark eyes, which Gwendolen, whose own eyes were not looking straight at the Earl, did not see; and he bowed and turned again to his hostess.

The party was very much scattered that morning, for it turned out showery, so that nothing in the shape of an outdoor expedition was possible.

Lochisla rode out at ten o'clock, and was absent the best part of the morning—he wondered when he went more than eight miles to send a telegram. Why did he not send it from Bramblemore? But Errol Cameron knew best; he knew that in country places the secrets of the telegraph-office are not always kept.

Hyacinth was in the billiard-room with the men and the Loring ladies; and Beryl Marchmont practised new songs in the music-room; but Gwendolen shunned society, and withdrawing to the terrace, to a portion where an awning erected against the sun served also for protection against the intermittent showers, seated herself with some fancy work and a

book; but the work progressed little and the book remained open at one place.

She was sitting in the same spot still, gazing out at the trees before her, while that terrible passion of jealousy brooded like a dull fire in her heart, when, about half-past twelve, she heard the sound of hoof strokes, and, looking up quickly, saw the very man who, with Hyacinth, shared her thoughts, riding up the drive. He saw her, too, in the same moment, and bowed low, lifting his hat. Would he come and speak to her, Gwendolen asked herself, or go on into the house?

All doubts were shortly set at rest, for Lord Lochisla, throwing Kaiser's rein to Maellan, who came up opportunely, perhaps having seen his chief and foster brother, ascended the terrace steps and turned towards Gwendolen's retreat.

"I marvel," he said, not seeming to notice that her cheek flushed and her eyes sank as he approached, "to find you alone, Miss Stanhope; but I am glad of the opportunity, for I wished—if you will pardon me for so doing—to ask you a question."

Gwendolen bowed her head, and pointed to the vacant place beside her. He sat down, and turning towards her, said—

"Miss Stanhope, you spoke of having been wakeful last night. I hope it was not that your rest was disturbed?"

This was a strange beginning, and Gwendolen looked at the speaker wonderingly. Clearly something underlay the words.

"No," she said, after a pause, "I was not disturbed. What makes you suggest the idea?"

"Pardon?" While his dark eyes hardly seemed to glance at her, not an expression of the fair countenance escaped him; he was watching her intently. "Miss Stanhope, may I ask you not to mention to anyone that which I am going to speak about?"

"Certainly," said Gwendolen, almost holding her breath. "I will not speak a word."

"Thank you. I asked the first question for this reason. Hyacinth was disturbed in a very strange manner last night." He paused here; but Gwendolen's face showed only startled and intense interest—not a shadow of fear or consciousness. The Earl went on, "She is, remember, though imaginative—many might call superstitious—not at all given to fancies, and physically remarkably fearless. She told me this morning that while lying on a couch in her dressing-room, broad awake, she saw a white figure in the room, which crept, with a crouching gait, towards her bed-room. She could not see the face of the figure, but her thoughts naturally flew to the legend of that Lady Loring who, it is said, murdered some guest of whom she was jealous. Miss Stanhope, forgive me, I should not have told you."

For Gwendolen had drawn a quick, gasping breath, but still no sign of consciousness. He had touched a memory, the memory, perchance, of a terrible thought.

"No, no," she said, eagerly, "go on, I entreat you."

"Hyacinth then watched this figure until it vanished into her apartment. Then she rose to quit the room, when the figure, turning back, seemed to perceive her; and pursued her."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Hyacinth fled," continued the Earl, after another pause, "and, gaining on her pursuer, reached the foot of the stairs, when, looking back, she saw that the form had vanished, nor did she again see it."

Gwendolen's eyes were dilated with horror.

"What did Hyacinth do?" she said, at length, "did she faint?"

"No; she summoned courage, after a while, to return to her room, and saw nothing more of her visitor. But, Miss Stanhope, I am unwilling to accept the idea of a supernatural appearance. Such things have been done for robbery."

"Yes; but has Hyacinth been robbed?"

"No; still the thief might have been startled and given up the intention, for that night, at least. Then, again, there is another tangible solution to the mystery."

"What is that, Lord Lochisla?"

"Sleep-walking."

Gwendolen started and shuddered; the idea of somnambulism is always "eerie" and unpleasant.

"Do you suspect anyone?" she asked, directly.

"No; I merely conjectured."

"Only three people beside Hyacinth sleep in the gallery. Hyacinth, her maid, Clarice Loring, and myself. Julie does not walk in her sleep, neither does Clarice, nor do I. I never did such a thing in my life. The servants sleep a long way off, and what should make one of them traverse all that distance, and seek out Hyacinth especially?"

"True," said the Earl, thoughtfully. "I confess that things seem to favour Hyacinth's idea of a supernatural agent, and I, of course, have no doubt of the abstract possibility of such visitations; but I think one should not accept the supernatural until all natural solutions have failed."

"Aye," said Gwendolen. "I, you know, do not profess to have any faith in ghosts; but we are often less courageous than our opinions, and what you have told me makes me realize that fact."

"Forgive me—" began the Earl, but Gwendolen interrupted him.

"No; I am glad I have heard of the matter; and be sure if I hear or see anything that may help to elucidate it, I will tell you. Poor Hyacinth! She must have been brave indeed to go back to her room again. Why did she not come to me, or go to Julie?"

"Perhaps at first her only definite instinct was flight. Then when she was able to think she would not like to disturb anyone, with, too, such a tale of horror."

"She has extraordinary self-control. I should never have guessed by her face to-day that she had passed through so much. She ought not to sleep alone any longer."

"No," said Lord Lochisla; "she told me her maid should share her room with her. Such shocks are dangerous things, even to strong men, and Hyacinth is but a fragile girl."

The ringing of the luncheon-bell at this moment put an end to a conversation which Gwendolen would fain have prolonged; Lord Lochisla rose and, with a few courteous words, withdrew. He had discovered all that he had sought to know; but Gwendolen, ignorant of the motive which had led him to her side, nursed a wild hope that perchance he was beginning to unbend a little.

True, his manner was unchanged—courtly, gentle, but indifferent still; and he might have originally spoken to her only to see if she could throw any light on the mystery of last night, but he had gone beyond that necessity. Why, too, had he come to her instead of to Clarice Loring? So many "brides light as air" bear a grave import when the wish fathers the thought.

It was not till just before dinner that Hyacinth found an opportunity to say a few words privately to Lochisla. She met him in one of the corridors as she was descending to the drawing-room.

"Well met," she said, half smiling, and glancing round her with the instinct of caution, though she knew that no one in the house besides herself and the Earl spoke or understood German. "I wanted to say something to you, Count Errol, and fortune has at last favoured me."

"Say on, my child."

"I think I will not write to Aunt Philippa yet, Errol; not till I see how Louis is. You see I am not actually committed to a decision. What I said was spoken in anger, and Aunt Philippa might suppose I did not fully mean it. She would say nothing to Louis, for he would be so angry with her; and if I write, Louis must know why I leave, and it will make him worse. Besides—" her voice faltered a little as she saw that Lochisla's face gave little encouragement to her idea—"besides, if he should want me to be with him he would not

ask me, perhaps, and it would make it more painful for both of us."

"You want to leave yourself free to return to Stanhope Lea—to live there again?"

"That would only be right, Errol," said the girl, gazing at him in wonderment, for his tone and manner were almost stern.

"Right—maybe," he answered, not meeting her eyes. "But, well—well, my child," he laid his hand on hers—"do not write yet; but promise me that you will do nothing without first speaking to me."

"Of course I should tell you, Errol."

Her lips quivered. It was so perplexing, so passing strange that Errol Cameron should oppose a step which duty and affection alike commanded. He surely could not in any way distrust Louis Stanhope—most loyal, gentlest of men.

"I know that, heart's dearest," said the Earl; "but I wanted something more than to be told you were going to do something to which you are already pledged."

"I have promised even that, Errol. But surely there could be no alternative?"

"Heaven only knows!" said Lochisla, in a low voice. "You look startled"—he stopped, and added, bending down to her—"trust me still, Hyacinth, my child-love; trust me a little longer—only a little longer."

Before the girl could answer those singular words, a distant door opened, and at once the Earl's manner changed. He was lover no more, but soldierly courtier again, and, smiling, placed Hyacinth's hand on his arm and turned towards the staircase, and when Helen Sandon approached, she only saw that Lord Lochisla was leading Hyacinth to the drawing-room.

But those last words filled the girl's heart. They seemed to have only one meaning—separation. She had given him her trust for ever, not for a time only, and he seemed to say, "Trust me till we part; then your faith will be no more tried; then if doubts of the past arise it will be better; so will grief be softened, for love must suffer where doubt enters in." Could he mean that? Let be; she would be silent till the time came, the supreme moment in which the decision must be made—the decision to which she must bow—or which her love, her prayers, must have power to change.

CHAPTER XXX.

MADGE ADAMS COMES TO BRANHAMMERE.

HYACINTH VERNON was not disturbed that night by the mysterious lady of Eoring, nor the night after; and, in addition to locking the door, the further precaution of searching every nook and corner was taken by Julie, who, though Hyacinth gave her no information, readily came to the conclusion that mademoiselle had "seen something." Else why have her—Julie—to sleep in the same room? and why keep a candle burning all night?

Hyacinth herself, when questioned by Clarice Loring and others, would only admit that she felt "nervous." She was superstitious, and could not help putting some faith in the story of the Loring banshee. Gwendolen, too, kept her own counsel well; and so the truth was not suspected—the truth, that is, so far as Hyacinth knew it.

She was thinking of it now; she could not shake herself free of that dreadful night; while she sat on the lawn under the lime-tree, and scarcely heard the Duke of Merivale's pretty speeches, wishing him a thousand miles away, and answering him, when he did speak, so abruptly, that at length he was piqued, and said, reproachfully—

"Miss Vernon, I am afraid my poor efforts are in vain; I only succeed in boring you."

"Pardon," said she, rousing herself, "but you know it is not my fault. I own I was thinking of some rather painful things; yet, if you would talk to me as if I were a sensible being you might disperse the cloud. If you are too lazy to talk rationally you must not blame me if I am inattentive."



[A HAVEN OF REST.]

The Duke bit his lip and coloured high. "Miss Vernon, I am reproved. Shall I be silent?"

"If you like to be; but talk common sense, and I will listen."

"Would you listen if I talked the common sense that I should most wish you to hear?"

"That might not be common sense at all," returned Hyacinth, carelessly. "You and I would very likely regard the matter from opposite points of view."

"You ask me to be serious, and when I try to be, you jest."

"For your sake, not mine," said Hyacinth, very gravely; and at that moment she heard Clarice calling her name.

"Here I am," she said, rising quickly, and advancing to meet her friend half way, leaving the Duke to reflect at leisure on her last words.

"Hyacinth," said Clarice, "there is someone here who would like to see you. She is with Gwendolen now—an old woman named Adams."

"Madge Adams!" exclaimed Hyacinth, "how did she come here?"

"I don't know; but she seems to know Lord Lochisla quite well."

"Oh! yes; she comes from Thorndean, you know. I will go and see her. How kind of you to call me. Where is she?"

"In the breakfast-room," returned Clarice.

And a minute later Hyacinth was in the presence of Madge Adams, who embraced and kissed her with tears of pleasure; and then the girl asked wonderingly how Madge came there.

"Easily answered, Miss Vernon," said the old woman. "At the village yonder, beyond Bramblemere, I have a very dear old friend living, and she is very ill, so they sent for me to come and see her, and I went, and found her ill, indeed! but not so bad as I expected. So I thought I would come and see Miss Gwendolen and you."

"And Hyacinth," added Gwendolen, "Madge

is going to stay here while her friend needs her, for it seems they can't put her up, and she is going to have the room in which Julie used to sleep."

"Ah! that is nice!" exclaimed Hyacinth, clasping her hands. "But how is it?"

"Why, missy," said Madge, "I was talking to the Earl when Lady Loring came in, and he spoke of me to her, and was so good as to ask her if I could stay here for a little, and she consented—quite pleased to do anything he wished, I thought; and then he mentioned that your maid, missy, slept with you, and there was a vacant room in the corridor, and my lady said she would be only too happy that I should be near Miss Gwendolen and you."

"It will be nice," said Hyacinth, caressing Madge's hand. "And Madge, have you seen Louis lately? How is he?"

Madge shook her head, and looked very grave.

"I have been telling Miss Gwendolen, missy, he is not at all what I should like to see him. No, I don't mean to say there is any danger, but he is far from being well. I saw him just before I left, and he said he was going to write to you and Miss Gwendolen again in a day or two."

Hyacinth sighed, and turned away with a heavy cloud on her brow; and after some more conversation Madge was allowed to depart under the care of Ian Maclean.

When Hyacinth and Gwendolen retired that night Madge Adams was not yet in her room; the door stood open and all was dark within.

"Gossiping with the servants, no doubt," said Gwendolen; and she entered her own room.

But the servants had already retired, and it was not in the servants' region that Madge was sitting now, but in the library; and opposite to her, speaking to her while she listened with a face grave and perturbed, sat the Earl of Lochisla.

They were not long together; Madge rose up presently, bade the Earl good-night with a

long close clasp of the hand, and taking her chamber candle departed to her room.

But not to rest. The candle was put out, but all night the door was a little open, and close by it, in an armchair, Madge Adams sat, like one who watched by a sick person, with bright, clear eyes wide open that never once blinked or seemed to grow weary. For what did she thus keep watch and ward? Through the long hours not a sound broke the stillness—nothing occurred to afford a reason for that unrelaxing vigil. Yet not till past sunrise did Madge rise from her chair and close her chamber door.

Surely it was not for the perturbed spirit of the jealous lady of Loring that she watched. What power could mortal hand have over the supernatural? And could Madge have sat calm and unmoved if she had expected to see an unearthly visitant?

Besides, it could have been of no spectre that she spoke when before breakfast she met Lord Lochisla—by chance as it seemed—and answered a quick questioning look from him with the low-spoken words,—

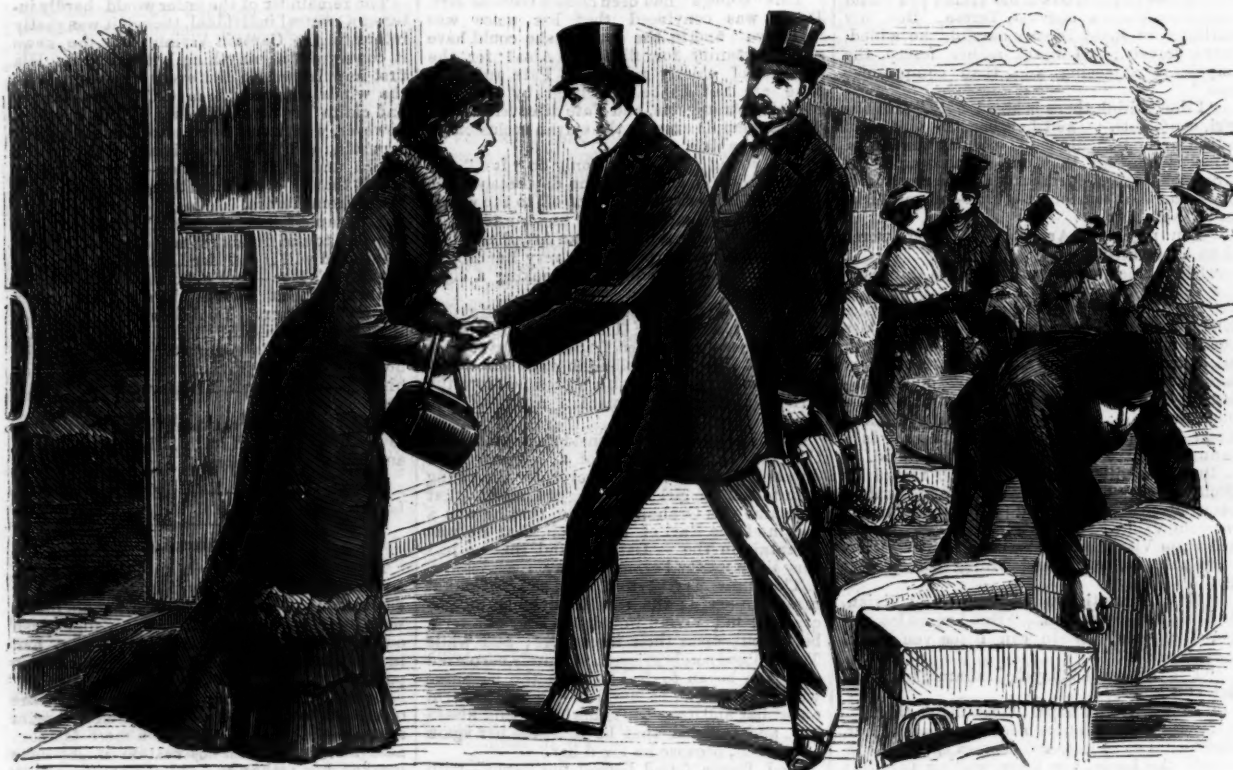
"Not a sound nor a sign—all as still as the grave!"

And he answered, "Heaven grant it always so; but we dare not relax the vigil."

Then he passed on, and Madge Adams said within herself, "A spark may light the fire, and then—then—" She shuddered and clasped her hands over her eyes for a moment, as if to shut out some dreadful vision, less actual than of memory. What memory was it that rose up before her with the awful possibility of a repeated reality?

(To be continued.)

Every real and searching effort at self-improvement is of itself a lesson of profound humility. For we cannot move a step without learning and feeling the waywardness, the weakness, the vacillation of our movements.



[TERESA FELT THE CLOSE CLASP OF HIS HAND, AND HEARD THE PASSIONATELY SPOKEN "MY OWN DARLING."]

NOVELETTE.]

"AN ILL-ASSORTED UNION."**CHAPTER I.**

IN THE SHRUBBERY—MIDNIGHT.

The moonlight poured in a silver flood over the wide hilly landscape and silvered the trees, whose branches stirred softly now and then as a light breeze swept whispering among them and died away in the leafy depths.

It was near midnight, and all the world was asleep; not a light shone in any one of the numerous windows of yonder rambling old house, half bowered in trees. Yet there was one wakeful spirit—not in the house, but a quarter of a mile away from it—standing alone in the deep gloom of the shrubbery, close to the paling that separated the grounds of the house from a bye-lane turning off the high road. It was a late hour for a woman to be abroad on any errand; and the probability that this young woman had not come forth for a solitary communing with nature, or indeed for the sake of nature at all, would hardly tend to mend matters in the estimation of any well-regulated mind. The woman was young—indeed not more than seventeen—tall, slim, and very handsome. She wore a dark gown and a cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her clustering brown curls, and her large bright eyes were bent eagerly in the direction of the afore-mentioned lane, from whence, evidently, the person for whom she was waiting would come.

In a few minutes the girl's straining ear caught a sound that made her involuntarily clasp her hands together—a sharp quick creak, as would be caused by a momentary weight resting on the frail palings—another second, and a tall man's figure flashed through the moonlight into the shadows; another, and the girl's slender form was in his arms, and his moustached lips were pressing hers with passionate kisses.

"My darling! my own Teresa!" he whispered at length, putting back the hood from her head and gazing down into her beautiful face with a world of love in his own, "it seems so long since we last met. Have you waited long for me to-night?"

"No, not long—not ten minutes, indeed," she answered; "and it would not matter if I had. I am quite safe here, you know."

"I don't feel that you are, sweetheart, unless I am with you; besides it goes against me to keep you waiting, and then—"

"Then what?" said Teresa, nestling to the man's heart like a happy bird.

"Why," he smiled, and folded her still closer to him, "there are so many minutes more of Paradise that I might have had, and missed."

Teresa laughed softly. "That would tell both ways," she said, with a naïveté that forbade any suspicion of coquetry.

"Would it?" The young man bent his handsome face till his lips touched her brow again, lingering there caressingly. "You really mean that, darling?"

Teresa lifted her pained wondering eyes to her lover's.

"Do you doubt me, Grahame?" she said. "Do you think I am too young to be steadfast?"

"No, no. Heaven forbid! It is my own conscience that pricks me sometimes, Teresa—pricks me with the question whether I am acting honourably by you—such a mere girl as you are—and at such times I feel a passing fear lest that thought may occur to you."

"Never!" said she, in a low passionate voice, "never! I cannot make you believe me. I can only tell you the truth. It would be treason in me to think there was one speck on your honour; and if I did think so I could not love you as I do."

"My loyal love! forgive me that I pained you, though you almost tempt me to repeat the offence that I may hear you say again you love me. What makes you trust me so per-

fectly, Teresa? You know nothing of me but what my own lips have told you; you are too young for the worldly knowledge that would be a protection against deception."

"Don't you want me to trust you?" said Teresa, with a wicked little smile quivering on her curved lips.

"Ah! you catch me in my own trap. It would break my heart if you did not trust me, darling; but I want to know why."

"Well, why did you love me? I was not the only girl in the world."

"But the most bewitching—the most irresistible," said Grahame Vivian. "Your Irish blue eyes took my heart captive with the first look they gave me."

"But that is no reason for loving me," persisted Teresa. "You love me because you do, and I trust you because I love you."

Which logic was certainly as good as his own, and about all that love can bring forth; for he or she who can catalogue a list of reasons why this man or this woman became "a part of sight" is not very deeply wounded by Cupid's arrows.

So after a little more lover's nonsense Grahame Vivian turned for a few moments to matters more subliminal.

"Was all safe to-night?" he asked. "Are you sure no one suspected?"

"Quite sure. Minerva sleeps a long way off from my room, you know, and I stole out the way I came before." From which reply it was evident that Miss Teresa had met her lover before in this highly reprehensible manner. He laughed.

"Poor Minerva!" said he; "imagine her horror and consternation if she should discover that one of her young ladies was *non est*."

"She would have an epileptic fit!" returned the wicked Irish girl, her blue eyes dancing with fun; "and when she recovered I should be expelled, and Aunt Mildred would put me into a convent, if she could."

"A needful qualification. I don't think that even if there were no such individual

existing as Captain Grahame Vivian you would take kindly to a convent, Teresa. But, my darling, you must be very careful," he added, more gravely. "I would rather forego the happiness of seeing you than compromise you."

"I don't think there is any danger," said the girl, confidently; "and I rather like a spice of adventure. I should enjoy one day the fun of Minerva knowing that one of the pupils of Graystone College for Young Ladies met someone—and that someone a soldier—at midnight in the shrubberies!"

"You madcap! Are soldiers, then, worse than other men?"

"Schoolmistresses always seem to think so."

"Schoolgirls don't; oh! Teresa?"

"No," said Teresa, with a contented smile, which compelled this particular soldier to kiss the tender lips again; and then they were both silent for a long time, standing heart to heart in close embrace, and only feeling—not thinking—of the solemn majestic calm of the still summer night; for they thought not at all, and knew, each of them, only that there was a man, and there was a woman in the world.

But time will fly, and clocks will record its flight whether Love will or no; and presently a clear silver chime boomed pitilessly across the sleeping valley—one—two!—and Teresa started from Vivian's breast with a look of terror.

"Grahame, it will be dawning soon, I must go."

"Cruel hours that will not lag," said Vivian, holding the girl to him. "But I must let you go, I suppose. When can I see you again, sweetheart?"

"I cannot quite tell yet, Grahame, but I will let you know."

"I must live on hope. Good-night, then."

It was some minutes before he released her, but he did so at last, and Teresa sped back towards the house, her lover waiting till by a very liberal calculation of time she must have been safe within doors, when he once more leapt the paling and took his way down the lane towards the high road. Three miles lay before him; they had seemed but a few hundred yards two hours ago, now they were more like five miles than three, although Captain Grahame Vivian was a practised pedestrian, who would walk with ease his thirty miles a day.

CHAPTER II.

AT FIRST SIGHT.

MISS TERESA BRIDE TEMPLE, only daughter of Sir John Temple, belonged, as her name proclaimed, to a good Irish family, but a family richer in "blue blood" than in current coin of the realm; consequently my lady inherited from her parents nothing more substantial—from a worldly point of view—than ancient lineage, a few family jewels, and last (but not least) the fine qualities of mind and temperament that, if not invariably the portion of gentle blood, are more often found co-existent with it than without it.

In addition to these advantages, Teresa possessed some which were not inherited, but bestowed upon her by Dame Nature, in compensation, doubtless, for the loss of the broad acres which once had belonged to the Temples—namely, great beauty of person, a quick and expansive intellect, an earnest, enthusiastic nature, and a strong steadfast will; add to these the bright wit and vivacity which are the almost invariable gifts of her people, and Teresa Temple was tolerably well armed for the battle of life.

The death of both her parents while she was still a child cast Teresa upon the care and guardianship of an aunt by marriage—Mrs. Daere, widow of a well-to-do, but not wealthy man.

Mrs. Daere was English, elderly, prim, and old maidish. She found the warm hearted, merry madcap Irish girl somewhat of a handful; and so put her to various schools, ending with the finishing establishment of Miss Saunders, situated in the heart of the country.

This "college" had been chosen because Mrs. Daere was convinced that her niece was "flighty;" and in the country she could have no opportunity for flirting. Alas! for the wisdom of elderly relatives. Fate and Fortune are not to be outwitted by the best meaning stratagems, and Fate discovered Miss Teresa Temple even in the sylvan seclusion of Colebrooke Vale.

The young lady, intent only on "fun," and never dreaming of lovers, one day escaped the vigilance of teachers and went off to the woods by herself. There, lounging under a tree, she came suddenly on Fate—an Arcadian shepherd tooting on a pipe, but a very handsome, soldierly-looking young man, smoking a cigarette.

The young man accented the beautiful disturbance of his solitude; Teresa, fearless as she was innocent, responded frankly. The upshot was that the two strolled through the woods for hours, and parted with a promise from the girl to meet her companion again—if she could.

She did manage it—at considerable risk—but this interview was only of a few moments' duration; long enough, however, for the young man to tell the girl something of himself—that his name was Grahame Vivian, that he was a cousin of the Earl of Harrington, that he was a captain in the—Lancers, and that he had very little means beyond his pay.

This time Teresa told him she could not meet him again; she would certainly be discovered, but Vivian would not hear of a term being put upon their interviews; and while Teresa stood sorely grieved, yet sorely perplexed—for she began to feel as if all the sunshine was slipping out of her life—he put his arm about her and drew her to his breast and kissed her, and told her that he must see her again—he must, because he loved her.

And Teresa found herself too happy—with a great dazed happiness—to shrink from the embrace that held her in such masterful fashion, or shun the lips that pressed her own; and so, at length, half whispering, faltering, she made the only feasible suggestion—that she should, whenever possible, meet her lover in the shrubbery at or near midnight.

He gave her the address where he was staying—a friend's house three miles distant. The compact was sealed, and already Teresa had three times met Captain Vivian, at the appointed tryst; while poor Miss Saunders (irreverently nicknamed Minerva) imagined her pupil to be wrapped in slumbers deep.

Now I have no intention of recommending for imitation the proceedings of this madcap young lady. I will only say, in her excuse, that she was only seventeen, ignorant of the world, without a thought of evil, and that in her bringing up the element of love—in any form—had been so entirely left out, that she could scarcely have been blamed for giving her warm heart to even a far less attractive personage than Captain Grahame Vivian.

As for his share in the business, perhaps he was not much to blame after all. Certainly he never troubled his head about parents and guardians, though Teresa was hardly more than a child; but then he loved her—and love need never go far afield for sophistries to justify itself.

These midnight interviews were, however, destined to come to an abrupt termination. Twice more Teresa contrived to meet her lover, and after that an interval of more than a week occurred. At the end of that time Captain Vivian received a letter from his lady-love. It ran thus—

"DEAR GRAHAME,—

"We cannot meet any more. Minerva has found out, somehow, that I, once or twice at least, met 'someone' at a 'late hour.' That is all she knows—but she is furious. Of course I would tell no king. She has written to Aunt Mildred, and I am hourly expecting to be sent for. I will write to you again. Of course your letters will be forwarded if you leave Avenel. But don't write to me here on any account. I have posted this with great difficulty."

The remainder of the letter would hardly interest a neutral individual, though it was vastly interesting to Captain Vivian; but the news it conveyed was anything but welcome. His first impulse was to cast every impediment to the winds, go straight to Colebrooke House, and claim his bunny Teresa. That impulse, however, was promptly rejected for more sober counsels, and Captain Vivian—chafe as he would under the inflation—was forced to admit that he could do nothing until he again heard from Teresa.

"I dare not tell her the truth," he muttered, as he paced to and fro his room that night. "And what good will it do? For I cannot openly fly in my father's face—poor old man; it would break his heart! But I certainly shall not marry Addie Mortimer. Doubtless Aunt Mildred would be reconciled if she knew all. But I am afraid of Teresa's generosity and pride. No, no; only Captain Vivian with little more than his pay—to her, until I can see my way a little more clearly."

So he re-read Teresa's epistle for the sixth or seventh time, bided it for fully the twentieth, and put it in his bosom.

CHAPTER III.

A REMONSTRANCE.

IN A stiff hard chair, in a stiff hard room, a starch and prim elderly female, arrayed in black silk, sat erect and stern. Her thin hands were ominously folded, there was a slight flush on her yellow cheek, her whole aspect had in it something of defiance, for indeed she was partly on her defence.

Opposite to her sat a lady fully fifty years of age, in walking apparel. Starch and prim also, this lady had about her a more fashionable air, and a keen observation might have marked her rather as a childless matron than as an old maid, whereas "spinster" was written in every line of her companion's face and figure. The visitor was speaking in a deep metallic voice.

"It is most unfortunate, Miss Saunders, most unfortunate. I cannot understand how my niece succeeded in evading the vigilance of those set over her."

"You could not, madam," Minerva replied, "regret the circumstance more than I do. It is the first time anything of the sort has happened in my establishment, and it is certainly not for lack of watchful care. I do not know that Miss Temple has quitted the house in this manner on more than one occasion; I can only speak of the one occasion on which she was seen returning at about two o'clock in the morning. With you she may, of course, be more communicative, but she obstinately refused to tell me anything beyond the mere admission, when charged with it, that she had met someone. I will allow that she did not take refuge in falsehood, but she distinctly refused to throw any light on the matter, and throughout showed by her manner that she was quite reckless of consequences."

"You questioned her as to any accomplices?"

"I did; but she declared she had none. No one, she declared most emphatically, knew anything at all. I believe she is speaking the truth in this, because she added that she was too wise to put herself in anyone's power, a speech which—pardon me—displayed a painful sharpness for so young a person."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Daere. "Nevertheless," she added, "my niece must have on some former occasion corresponded with or met the person she acknowledges to have met that night."

"Possibly before she became my pupil," responded Miss Saunders, tartly. "She is evidently a young lady capable of carrying out her plans with a consummate deceit, only equalled by the amazing indiscretion of her conduct. That a well brought up girl should steal forth at midnight for a clandestine interview with a member of the opposite sex is to me almost incredible."

"And to me also," said Mrs. Daere. "I

feared that my niece was somewhat flighty, but I never dreamed of such conduct as that which she has herself confessed. It is probably only some school-girl fancy, which will quickly be forgotten, but none the less has she brought discredit on herself and on your establishment. I trust the matter has not been allowed to travel?"

"For my own sake," said Minerva, with a grim smile, "as well as for yours, I should naturally keep such a scandal within the narrowest possible limits."

Mrs. Dacre bowed rather coldly.

"Thank you. Then if you will kindly inform Miss Temple that I am come to fetch her away, and see that her boxes are packed, I will remove her at once."

Minerva rose, inclined her head stiffly, and swept from the apartment.

Presently Miss Teresa Temple made her appearance in jaunty hat and feather and demure walking costume, looking bewitching enough to win pardon for the blackest of sins from anyone but an ancient spinster, but—truth compels me to say—without any sign of shame or penitence in her looks or mien; indeed, the girl seemed bent on that course which is termed by schoolboys and others versed in slang "bluffing it out."

Mrs. Dacre did not even offer her hand. She fixed a cold, stern glance on the girl's face, and said idly,—

"Well, Teresa, I hope you are satisfied with the disgrace you have brought upon yourself and upon me."

"Disgrace!" repeated Teresa, flushing high, "I don't see that I have done anything of the kind. You couldn't say more if I had run away with the footman."

"If you cannot see," said Mrs. Dacre, severely, "that your conduct is scarcely one degree removed from that of which you speak so flippantly, I am deeply grieved for you. I dare not think of your future, if, at an age when you ought not to dream of love and lovers, you actually see no harm in going out at midnight to meet anyone. I cannot tell you the dreadful shock your behaviour has given me."

Certainly Teresa had been wrong, very wrong; and if her aunt had adopted a different method of treatment she would probably have seen her fault and told the whole truth; but neither Miss Saunders nor Mrs. Dacre had treated the affair in a manner likely to impress a high-spirited girl with a sense of wrongdoing. Stronger language could hardly have been employed if the poor child were a hardened offender, guilty of positive wickedness; and instead of feeling the smallest compunction for the distress and trouble she had caused her relative, Teresa's young heart was completely hardened against her. She felt stonily indifferent to Mrs. Dacre's feelings, and positively glad that she had so utterly upset Minerva's maiden equanimity.

She made no reply to her aunt's last speech, but walked to the window to see if her trunk was put on to the carriage, and at that moment Minerva entered the room. Teresa turned round, walked straight past the schoolmistress, out into the hall and down the steps, leaving poor Minerva speechless with amazement at her brazen face, and hopeless lack of respect.

Mrs. Dacre bade a hasty farewell to Miss Saunders and followed her niece, and the carriage drove off to the station.

Not once on the way to London did Mrs. Dacre speak to Teresa, and not once did the girl offer to break the silence. She was thinking of Gussame Vivian; wondering when she should see him again, wondering what her aunt meant to do. Would she try the convent? If she did Teresa was fully resolved to sweep a dressing-gown over her head and enter a cloister.

A shred of the likeness between her and her father on saint began and ended with the name.

CHAPTER IV.

TERESA IN EXILE.

"TERESA," said Mrs. Dacre at breakfast, the day after the arrival of aunt and niece in town, "we leave London to-morrow for Herne Bay."

"Very well, Aunt Mildred."

Teresa was too proud to show what she felt at this announcement, but her heart sank within her. Herne Bay! She had never been to the place, but she knew it by repute as the dulllest of seaside resorts, where nobody ever went except *bourgeois* and their wives and large families—where there was nothing to be seen, nowhere to go, and a bleak north-east wind perpetually blowing.

Of course the girl knew quite well that the very reasons which made Herne Bay so undesirable from her point of view were those which had inclined her aunt to select it. She (Teresa) would be out of mischief in a spot where no more eligible cavalier than a London shopboy could by any possibility be discovered, and where the presence of a stranger anyway above the *bourgeois* class would easily be known to Mrs. Dacre, supposing that her niece had the audacity to communicate with the man she had already met.

The probability was, however, that Aunt Mildred did not—naturally enough—credit the niece with anything more than a school-girl flirtation—far too ephemeral on both sides to stand the test of time and distance. Mrs. Dacre had done her best to wring a confession from Teresa, but had obtained no better success than that which attended Miss Saunders. The girl steadily refused to move one inch beyond her original admission, and her aunt was compelled to give her up as "incurable."

The quiet indifference with which Teresa accepted what she must have regarded as a fiat of exile was by no means pleasing to Aunt Mildred. Of course the indifference was assumed, but it was hardly the less annoying on that account. Mrs. Dacre, in her present humour, would rather have preferred a show of temper or opposition which would have enabled her to lecture her niece. She had fully expected opposition, and felt somewhat like a person who has marched forth valiantly to encounter a burglar and finds nothing worse than the cat, disturbed in a scuttling among the pots and pans.

"It is a nice quiet place," continued Mrs. Dacre, after a pause which she felt was awkward; and she lifted her coffee cup to her lips, not quite knowing how to finish the sentence she had begun. Teresa came to her rescue.

"Sweetly quiet," she said. "In the morning one can dig in the sand—when the tide is out—and build small ranges of Alps; in the afternoon one can look at countless cherubs building ranges of Alps, and all day long there is the pea-soup sea and the north-east wind to delight one. I always thought Herne Bay must be an earthly-Paradise, auntie."

"A tone of sarcasm is not specially becoming, Teresa," said her aunt, turning pale with anger; "and will certainly not deter me from going where I please. Doubtless you would prefer Ryde or Brighton, where you could walk on the pier to be stared at, and flirt with young men as giddy as you are yourself."

"Oh! but I can flirt at Herne Bay," returned Teresa, composedly. "I like young men who wear pink neckties and drop their h's; and there is a pier where one can study historical costumes, as nobody wears anything newer than the mode of two years ago. One of our girls was at Herne Bay once and saw a woman on the pier in a Paisley shawl and a muslin gown! How delicious!"

There was no doing anything with the girl, that was clear. Mrs. Dacre rose abruptly from the table.

"You deserve to live there for the rest of your life," she said, acidly, and quitted the room.

"Perhaps I do," muttered Miss Teresa when left alone, "but I haven't the remotest intention of doing so. If Aunt Mildred stops at

Herne Bay longer than I can endure it, I can easily frighten her away by getting up a flirtation with the chemist's young man." And the young madcap laughed to herself, finished the *Morning Post*, and then went off to give instructions about her packing.

The next evening beheld aunt and niece established in comfortable lodgings facing the "pea-soup" sea at Herne Bay. It had been a bright autumn day, but no sun can brighten the ineffable dullness of Herne Bay, with its strip of prosaic houses set down on a bleak ugly flat, in front of a murky sea, as if they had been dropped there and forgotten. Teresa, however, made no remark about the place; she even smiled to herself at her aunt's tactics; after all, they could not live at Herne Bay for ever. As soon as she retired for the night the girl wrote a long letter to Captain Vivian, telling him not to write to her till he heard from her again. In the course of this letter she chanced to allude to a school-friend—a Miss Merton—now in London; and she also wrote a letter to Miss Merton.

A day or two later a reply came from Miss Merton, profoundly pitying her dear Teresa in her exile. What could possess Mrs. Dacre to go to such an awful place as Herne Bay? Old ladies were so full of whims! Teresa smiled. It was no whim this time, at any rate.

Certainly, Miss Temple was in no danger of over-exciting herself in the Paradise of waters with more olive branches than manners. Every morning, after breakfast, she went for a constitutional with her aunt; sometimes Mrs. Dacre went out in the afternoon also, and Teresa filled up the intervals as best she might—sitting on the beach, reading novels from the circulating library, or throwing pebbles into the sea.

The girl was eating her heart out, and was, in consequence, ripe for any mischief. Her proud free spirit chafed bitterly under a sense of cruel injustice. She was parted from the man she loved, which would have made Venice seem dull and colourless, and shut up in a dreary "hole," where there was not a single thing to distract her.

She dared not even allow her lover to write to her. Gossip travels quickly in small places where people have little or nothing to do, and Teresa knew that her appearance was marked. How easily Mrs. Dacre might discover that she was corresponding with someone—perhaps even succeed in getting hold of one of Vivian's letters!

Such a risk was not to be incurred. Yet all this time the girl showed no outward sign; she suffered in proud silence; but all the more fiercely the volcano burnt within. Poor Mrs. Dacre, who knew as much of human nature as she knew of the differential calculus, acted for the best according to her lights; but if her object had been to fling her young niece headlong into evil she could hardly have taken better measures than those which she had adopted for the attainment of a precisely opposite end.

"If this lasts much longer," said Teresa to herself one morning, "I shall run away, or do something desperate."

CHAPTER V.

IN PICCADILLY IN AUGUST.

"LORD VIVIAN! you in town. This is at once an unexpected pleasure, and a great surprise."

And the speaker, bending out of an elegant victoria, extended a faultlessly-gloved hand to the Earl of Errington's son.

"I might retort, Miss Mortimer," he replied, smiling; "who would dream of seeing you in Piccadilly in August?"

Miss Mortimer—a handsome blonde of twenty—laughed.

"Well, there is nothing for it," said she, "but mutual confessions. Papa keeps me in town; he has one of his bad attacks of gout, and I could not leave him, could I? Now will you make confession?"

"Willingly. There is an *on dit* that my regiment may be ordered to the seat of war, and as the summons, if it comes, will be sharp, I am up in town to settle a few business matters; for one may win glory, or one may win only—death."

Adelaide Mortimer had started at Lord Vivian's first mention of foreign service. She now said, hastily, "Pray do not speak so lightly of death, I cannot bear to hear it. I hope—no," she added, correcting herself, "I must not hope that you will remain at home; but it is hard sometimes for us poor women to feel heroic."

"Yet you always conquer in the end," said Lord Vivian, gallantly. "We should not fight so well if we did not know that women's hearts were with us on the battle-field."

"True, true," said Miss Mortimer, with an earnestness that seemed to give her words some personal application. "But then, also, there is the waiting—watching—the hope deferred. You remember how beautifully Mrs. Browning describes it in one of her poems—'Parting Lovers.'"

"I grant you," said Lord Vivian, "that we, in the rush and excitement of a campaign, have the easier part, but we also have our hours of watching and waiting. However," face and manner changed, and he smiled brightly, "we must not grow sentimental in Piccadilly at noonday—in August too—unless we mourn over the 'abomination of desolation.' Positively I have walked the whole way from Constitution Hill without meeting a soul that I knew till your voice accosted me."

"And roused you from a day-dream," added Miss Mortimer. "You seemed far away enough from Piccadilly in thought."

So he had been—eighty miles away—sitting on a dreary sea beach, though not dreary to him, because a curly-haired blue-eyed girl was beside him, and her hand was in his, and her sweet voice in his ears; and the shores of the Dead-Sea would blossom like the rose under those conditions. But he did not even change colour as he answered lightly—

"If one is forced to tread Piccadilly in the 'silly season' one's thoughts must needs fly somewhere else. It is bad enough to be here in the body—there is nothing to chain one's mind; and how should I guess when I came out that my penance should turn to such happiness?"

"If battles were won by tongues!" exclaimed Miss Mortimer, blushing, "you would have no need of your sword, Lord Vivian."

"Whole wars are lost by tongues," returned Lord Vivian, "but never was a skirmish won by them."

"You are hard on the tongue, but military men never like 'alke-talkee.' *Eh, bien!* I must not detain you now, as you say you have business; but when you have leisure take pity on our loneliness, and, of course, if—" she faltered a little—"if you are ordered abroad you will come and bid good-bye?"

"Surely—then I will say *au revoir*." Once more the lemon kid rested for a moment in his hand, then the victoria drove on, and Lord Vivian continued his way.

"I wonder," he was saying to himself, "I wonder whether Adelaide Mortimer would love me if she believed I was only Captain Vivian of the Lancers, with hardly more than his pay to live on. Not she! Addie Mortimer is of another metal. You don't see it, my dear old father, but I do. She is as unreal as a wax-work figure—only it is her soul and not her body that is made of rags. That false, mercenary woman in exchange for my pure hearted darling! No, no." He actually laughed; the contrast between the two women seemed to him so great as to be ludicrous. "When the sky turns green and the trees turn blue I may think about it, but not till then."

He called an evening or two later at Sir James Mortimer's house in Stratton-street, but he took care to keep clear of subjects that might by an adroit turn be made personal; and to do this when, by chance or design, he and Adelaide Mortimer were left for fully half-

an-hour alone together required no small amount of skill.

If any of Lord Vivian's brother officers had seen the "war game" they would certainly have allowed that his qualifications for diplomacy equalled those which distinguished him as a soldier, for Grahame Vivian was noted as the most brilliant officer in the regiment.

The game, however, was a fatiguing one; and when the young man found himself once more in Piccadilly he felt like a man who has had a narrow escape from some peril where a false step, even a glance aside, might have proved fatal. Facing a thousand foes with scarce a hundred men at his back was nothing to facing Miss Adelaide Mortimer alone in a London drawing-room. Never again, however, he firmly resolved, would he place himself in such a position. As he had himself said of a nobler strife, he had emerged with glory this time, it might be death the next.

Miss Mortimer, meanwhile, regarded the situation from a very different point of view. She had made up her mind to become Lady Vivian, and at no very distant period Countess of Errington; and though during the past season the young peer had paid her no special attention she had cherished the hope that sooner or later he would be at her feet.

She was the beauty of the season, the most admired, most sought after woman in society. He must know that it was for his sake she had refused three or four men; he must be touched by her devotion; he had no other attachment; he paid no attentions to anyone else.

Yet here, on the eve, probably, of leaving England, perhaps never to return, he had made no sign; the opportunity had been given to him, and he had deliberately avoided it.

Adelaide's anger was aggravated by the bitter consciousness that she had throughout, and especially in her last interview with Lord Vivian, overstepped the bounds of maidenly reticence, and allowed the young man to see that her interest in him was deeper than that of a friend. She was that most irreconcilable of created beings—a woman scorned.

She had stooped her pride, and to no purpose; she had stepped out of her province, and had been rebuffed. No matter how courteously, how delicately the rebuff was given, it was given. Nothing could soften that hard fact.

Her overweening vanity, however, forbade her to believe that her failure to charm Lord Vivian was due to any fault in herself, or to that capricious law of selection which makes men often pass by the most attractive of women for no reason except that love falls haphazard, like the rain. No, there must be some other attachment; nothing else could account for Grahame Vivian's indifference to Miss Adelaide Mortimer.

"Some wretched entanglement, I dare say," said the perturbed beauty, as she tossed from side to side that night, unable to sleep; "some pretty *coryphée*, who has infatuated him for the time, or some rustic *belle*, whom he imagines an embodiment of sweet simplicity. He was dreaming of her, no doubt, when I met him in Piccadilly. It cannot be anyone else; there were no ladies staying at Avenel, and he never gave a second look to anyone during the season. Mad folly! But it is well he is going abroad; these ephemeral loves never stand the test of absence."

She found some consolation in this last reflection, and contrived, about dawn, to go to sleep; but if she could have been in the spirit with Lord Vivian the next morning she could scarcely have cherished even that crumb of comfort, for while she still "slumbered and slept," he was sitting by his untouched chocolate, letting it cool with the utmost indifference—indeed, he had entirely forgotten it—while he read a letter from Teresa.

"This place is so dull; oh! so dull," wrote the poor child, "and now I suppose we must stay for a week or two longer; for yesterday Aunt Mildred sprained her ankle badly in going down a grass slope to the beach where the ground is very broken. She cannot put her foot to the ground. I wonder if it would be

possible for me to arrange for you to write to me, if only just once? No one seems to write, not even Carrie Merton. I can't help fancying she must be ill."

"I have a great mind," said the young man, setting his teeth, "to run down and try to see her. Yet it might be wiser to wait till I hear from her again. My darling! it is maddening to think of her caged up in that wretched place, and yet, woman-like, she does not tell me half she endures, to spare me pain; but I can read between the lines, and I must put an end to the exile before long. I am a soldier, and I prefer cutting my way through a difficulty to sitting down and waiting for events to shape themselves."

CHAPTER VI.

A MOMENTOUS TELEGRAM.

"A TELEGRAM, please, miss."

Teresa, lounging listlessly in the window-seat, trying to read, "In a Winter City," looked up in astonishment as the servant handed her the yellow envelope. Mrs. Dacre, on her sofa, half-lifted herself, and looked keenly and suspiciously at her niece, whose face was unrevealing. In truth, Teresa had nothing to conceal. She quickly opened the telegram, and read it aloud—

"Caroline Merton, London, to Teresa Temple, Herne Bay.—Come to me at once, I am very ill, and must see you."

"Oh! auntie,"—the girl sprang impetuously to her feet—"I must go. She is ill—she may be dying. That is why she has not written for so long."

This was genuine emotion; there was no sign of any trickery here. Mrs. Dacre knew Carrie Merton's name, and that she and Teresa were great "chums," corresponding frequently; but for Teresa to rush off to London in this hasty way, and at night—

"My dear!" she said—Teresa had already snatched up the time-table, and was looking for the next up train—"you cannot possibly go up to-night."

"No," interrupted Teresa, flinging down the time-table, "the last train has gone. Oh, why didn't the telegram come an hour ago!"

"No doubt," said Mrs. Dacre, "you are exaggerating the danger. You jump at the conclusion that Miss Merton is dying. Young people always fly off at a tangent. I confess I do not at all like the idea of your going up to London by yourself in this manner."

"Aunt Mildred!" cried the girl, indignantly, "it is no time for etiquettes and fancies when people may be dangerously ill. I must go up by the first train to-morrow."

"I trust," exclaimed Mrs. Dacre, struck by a new alarm, "that it is nothing infectious."

"That would make no difference to me," said Teresa, "Carrie wants me—that is enough."

Remonstrance was useless when Miss Temple had once made up her mind to do a thing. Had her aunt refused her money for the journey she would have gone straight off and sold her watch or some of her trinkets; nothing would have prevented the accomplishment of her object.

She was out of the house the next morning before her aunt was up, for the train left about half-past eight, and she breathed more freely when she was fairly seated in the carriage and the train began to move.

The girl was too anxious about her friend to feel any exhilaration in the emancipation—however brief—from her durance vile. Her vivid imagination conjured up all sorts of possibilities, and the train seemed to travel at about the pace of a continental *diligence*, nor had she even the consolation of reflecting that she was approaching nearer to Grahame Vivian. It was not at all likely that he was in London; probably he was staying at some country house. She still, of course, wrote to Avenel; and wherever Captain Vivian was his letters would be forwarded.

With a quick sigh of relief, Teresa leaned back in her seat, as the train began slackening

speed to enter the terminus, but she bent forwards again the next moment laying her hand on the door with the instinct of impatience. Would the train never stop?

"Wait, young lady, don't get out yet," said a middle-aged man, the only other occupant of the compartment since the last station. "Don't risk a limb for the sake of a minute."

"I was not going to jump out yet," said the girl, smiling. "I—" she caught her breath at that moment, as the gentleman rose and opened the door, and the blood rushed to her brow. She had caught a glimpse of a tall figure on the platform—could she be mistaken? It was hidden, as the ample form of her fellow-traveller filled up the doorway, but in a second she saw it again—saw it full—it was Grahame Vivian!

As Teresa sprang to her feet he turned and came straight up to the carriage, and the girl, half dizzy with the shock of this utterly unexpected happiness, felt, almost as if in a dream, the close clasp of his hand, and heard the low, passionately spoken "My own darling!"

Grahame," she said, after a moment—"how is it you are here? and you don't seem surprised to see me."

"No, dear one—I expected you; I came to meet you. Don't look at me in that startled way. Come with me to the waiting-room. I cannot explain things before these people."

"But, Grahame"—a glimmering of the truth, or part of it at least, began to dawn on the girl's mind—"was it you, then, that—"

"Sent the telegram—yes, to be sure; and I am so sorry, darling, to have caused you anxiety. Come this way, and I will explain it all to you. Will you have some coffee first?"

"No, no; I want to hear what you have to tell me."

"On second thoughts," said Captain Vivian, "we will go to the 'Grosvenor,' and have a private room. One is never safe from prying eyes at these great stations."

They went out under the colonnade, and entered the hotel, where Captain Vivian ordered a private room; he would ring presently.

When the door was closed upon them, and they were alone, Grahame Vivian turned and folded the girl's slight form in his arms, and was silent for a long time, and Teresa had no disposition to break the silence; she was far too happy, resting on her lover's heart once more, to think about explanations, or anything else; she forgot even Carrie Merton, about whom she had been so anxious only a little while ago. All was swallowed up in this great joy. Presently, however, Vivian led his young companion to the sofa, and drawing her to his side, as they sat down, he said tenderly,—

"I seem to have a thousand things to say to you, Teresa, and yet I can say nothing—but you will understand that. Still, there are some things that I must speak to you about, and time is limited."

She started and clung closer to him as he said this. He went on, smiling now,—

"I wanted to see you to-day, Teresa, particularly. I will tell you why soon—and you yourself unconsciously furnished me with the means. You remember mentioning to me your friend, Carrie Merton, and in your last letter you told me that your aunt had sprained her ankle, and that Carrie had not written for a long time. So, you see, the thing was very simple, after all. You, I knew, would come rushing up as soon as you could, and your aunt could not come with you. I did not know Carrie's address, so I only put London."

"I noticed that," said Teresa, laughing; "but it was nothing, as I knew where she lived. Oh, I am so glad I told you about Carrie. Never mind the anxiety, this is worth it all. But, Grahame, you said the time was limited—you need not leave me just yet?"

"Would that I need never leave you!" said the young man, passionately. "No, not yet, darling, but this evening I must go; and per-

haps—" he spoke more slowly now, "for a long time, Teresa."

"Grahame!"

The quick sob, the wild upward look to his face, anticipated his next words.

"We are ordered to Egypt, darling; the order came very suddenly, and we sail in a day or two; I must leave London to-night."

No word or sob now, but the curly head went down on his breast, and she clung to him trembling, while he folded her close to him. It was so hard to part from her, to leave her alone, perhaps for ever, so bitterly hard.

His heart had throbbed high with that noble ardour of the soldier longing for the glorious excitement of the battle, hoping to win honour and renown; but now even those emotions were overshadowed by the bitterness of parting; yet it thrilled him with a new joy to see how Teresa accepted the fiat; no laments, no expression of the wish—pardonable in one so young—that the lot had not fallen on the man she loved. He had expected to find in her the knightly spirit, but he would not have wondered if she had fallen short of heroism. She was, after all, hardly more than a child, and her happiness was so new.

"My own brave darling," Vivian whispered, at length, "you are indeed worthy to be a soldier's bride. Teresa!" He spoke her name after a pause.

The girl lifted her head, but he added softly, caressing her hair the while,—

"A few moments longer, sweetheart, when you are a little calmer, then I will tell you the chief reason why I sent for you to-day."

"Was it not to—to say 'good-bye' to me?" asked the girl, wonderingly.

"Partly; but for something else, too. I hope"—his voice trembled a little now—"that you will not refuse me."

"I could not do that; I could not refuse you anything, Grahame."

"You may be speaking rashly, Teresa"—he lifted her face to his now, and looked steadily into her eyes—"I want to make a very great claim on your love, Teresa; I want you to trust me more than you have ever had need to trust in me yet"—still that earnest, wistful gaze meeting his, no sign of enlightenment as to his meaning, but a soft smile creeping over his lips. It seemed so strange that he should ask her to trust him to the uttermost; did she not do so already? He went on, tightening his clasp of her, "If I asked you, Teresa, to give yourself to me to-day—this hour—would you do it?"

"Grahame!" Now her whole face changed; she started from his arms, with a flash of almost terror in look and tone, "Do you mean—" she stopped, her eyes still fixed on his, her breath halting, the crimson sweeping over cheek and brow.

"I mean," he said, taking her hands in his own, "will you be my wife—to-day—now? Hush! listen to me. More than this—will you consent to let our marriage remain a secret for a time, till I return home; and go back to your aunt's house this evening as Teresa Temple. Will you do all this for me, my darling?"

No answer. She did not try to draw her hands away, but her head was averted now; her breast heaved, she trembled violently. Vivian spoke again in the same earnest manner,—

"It is not that I doubt you, Teresa; it is for your sake rather than my own, though it would be very sweet to me to feel that it is my wife who waits for my home coming; but I want to be secure in the knowledge that, in case I die, you are free—independent. You are not happy now. You are with a relative who has no love for you; who will doubtless consider it your duty to make a wealthy marriage in order to relieve her of an onerous charge. If I leave you now as you are, I shall go out with a very heavy heart. I shall know that if I fall you are alone, and practically friendless in the world, too young and too beautiful to work for yourself." He broke off abruptly, and added, almost in a whisper,

"Teresa, you will not refuse me? You will trust me?"

The girl turned to him, and hid her face on his breast with a sudden burst of tears.

"Yes, yes. Whatever you ask of me I will do. Oh! forgive me; but it seemed so strange. I—I—never thought of that."

"Poor child! Poor little one, how should you think of it?"

With a hundred endearments Vivian soothed the girl's agitation. Her perfect faith in him stabbed him with a feeling of self-reproach. Was he worth such a love as this? For though he knew he was giving Teresa an assured future, she did not know it. She was resigning her fate, without question, to a man admittedly poor, of whom, besides this, she knew absolutely nothing; trusting him with blind devotion.

"But why," she asked, after a time, "why must there be secrecy?"

"Will you let me be silent on that point, sweetheart, till I come home, then all shall be known? Or if I fall, your position shall be fully established."

"Very well," she said, softly, "I will not ask any questions."

It was a long, long kiss he pressed on her lips after that, and some minutes passed before he could speak again; then he told her how, hoping for her consent, he had made every arrangement for the marriage, and she had only to come with him. He wished it could have been otherwise, he said, very sadly; it was not in this fashion that he would have joined her life to his. But Teresa smiled and said that mattered nothing; and, after all she should feel more happy if she actually belonged to him.

It would be a strange wedding, indeed; stranger far than Teresa knew. For Lord Errington's eldest son should have been married amid a bevy of noble relatives and friends, with white-robed choristers chanting the marriage hymns, and his bride should have worn satin and jewels; but here all such accessories were lacking. No white robes and orange-blossoms—no carriages with pretty bridesmaids and wedding guests; but for carriage a Hansom cab, and for wedding apparel only an ordinary walking costume, not even the indispensable white; and the bride, in the most unorthodox fashion, was going to the church with the bridegroom. But somehow, as the cab bowed through the streets—the church, Vivian had told Teresa, was some distance off—the girl, sitting by her lover's side, felt very happy—a happiness only overshadowed by the nearness of separation. She was very silent, but Vivian often looked down into the sweet grave young face, and once he bent down and said, softly,—

"Are you still in the same mind, Teresa? I would not force your will."

She glanced up then with quick coming colour, and a look almost of pain in her blue eyes.

"Oh! no, no," she said, under her breath, "you must not think that, Grahame—that I want to turn back."

It was a little mission church in a crowded southern district to which Captain Vivian took his bride, and beside the priest there was no one in the church but the vergor, who gave the bride away, and two or three idlers, to whom the persons of the two principal parties concerned could not be known. Teresa felt as if she were in a dream, but she went through the ceremony very calmly and gravely, giving her answers in a clear, distinct voice; there could have been no doubt—whatever else was uncertain—that the almost child bride was a willing one; but in truth the priest was a personal friend of Grahame Vivian's, and knew a good deal more about the whole matter than Teresa herself knew.

The rest of that day was very bright and happy, despite the cloud that hung over it. Vivian took his bride away a few miles into the country, and they spent the hours till sunset among the Kentish lanes; but the journey back

was sorrowful, for the parting was very near now.

"You must arrange some means by which I can write to you, Teresa," said the young man, as they travelled townwards—they had the compartment in which they rode all to themselves.

"Oh, yes, yes—at any risk I must hear from you," she answered. "You will have to write to me first, Grahame. Would you mind sending your first letter to Carrie Morton—and she will forward it to me. I own quite trust her—she would not betray me; she will only know what I shall tell her, and we are close friends. After that I may be able to arrange differently; but I know Carrie will befriend me."

"Very well, sweetheart."

Teresa gave him her friend's address, and added, "You see, Carrie would always know where I am, and I don't know where Aunt Mildred might go."

"Not to any remote place, I hope," said Vivian, "where posts are scarce and uncertain."

"I won't go to such a place," declared Teresa, so resolutely that Vivian could not help laughing.

"Are you going to stand on your new rights?" he could not resist saying.

"No," she hid her face now. "I don't feel as if I had any. I don't realise it yet, Grahame."

"Nor I," said he, in an altered voice. "I cannot quite realise that this treasure I hold in my arms is indeed my own—my own dear wife," and he bent down and kissed her tenderly.

CHAPTER VII.

STARTLING NEWS FOR MISS MORTIMER.

In the grief of parting with her lover, Teresa had not given a thought to the difficulty of explaining her absence to her aunt, but as the train which took her back to Horne Bay approached that place of exile this difficulty forced itself upon her mind. There seemed no way out of it but truth, and Teresa had never uttered a lie in her life; yet truth here was clearly impossible, and refusal to say anything at all about her journey would be to convey the impression that the telegram had been a device of her own to cover a clandestine meeting with a lover. No, look at the question which way she would, there was nothing for it but to keep up the deception in which she had, originally, had no part.

Mrs. Dacre had hardly expected her niece to return the same evening; and was surprised as well as pleased to see her. Carrie, Teresa said, was very much better than she had expected to find her, and so she (Teresa) was enabled to return home the same day. Mrs. Dacre remarked that it was acting very impudently—whoever was responsible for it—to send off such a startling telegram, and the matter dropped; while Teresa sat down and wrote to her friend asking her to receive and forward letters that came from Egypt, explaining that the writer was her lover, unknown to "Aunt Mildred." A clandestine love affair, frowned upon by or unknown to elders, especially if the admirer be a soldier, is certain to win the sympathy and co-operation of any feminine creature under twenty, and so Teresa was not likely to lack a friend in Carrie Morton.

And Horne Bay, if still very dull, seemed more bearable to Vivian's young bride. True, he was gone from her, but he would come back to her, aye, covered with glory. You this ever hopeful, and there were his letters to look forward to; he was her own now, too, and she was his; nothing could really divide them again. So Teresa was happy, with a chastened happiness, but still weaving bright dreams of the future; and little imagining that almost before the ship that bore her husband away from her was clear of the sight of England's white coast, other hands were weaving a

web that was destined to shroud all her life in gloom.

Bitter was Adelaide Mortimer's disappointment—bitter her wrath—when instead of the farewell call she had expected from Lord Vivian before he left England she received only a brief letter, in which the writer stated that he had had no time to see anyone but his father before leaving England. But a heavier blow than this was to fall on her ere the day was old. A servant came to her in the course of the afternoon and told her that one Richard Upton, who had once dived as footman in Sir James Mortimer's household, earnestly desired speech of her. "I was for sending him away," the servant added, but he was so urgent, miss, that I couldn't get rid of him. He said he'd something he must tell you."

Adelaide's curiosity was aroused; she ordered that the man should be taken into the breakfast-room, and she went down, wondering what he had to tell her.

Richard Upton looked rather seedy and out at elbows. He began by stating that what he had to impart was worth money; he was out of employment now, and badly off. He would tell his secret for £30.

"Very well," Adelaide said; "I think you will not doubt my word when I say that if your secret is really worth anything to me I will give you the money."

"Certainly, miss. Of course," continued the man, "we servants know as well as our betters all the talk about who's going to marry who, and so on; and that's how I come to think—well, miss, as Miss Mortimer looked at him somewhat haughtily, "what I have to tell you is this:—Last Wednesday I was just outside the Grosvenor Hotel, when I saw Lord Vivian come up with a young lady—a very beautiful young lady, miss—"

"What has that to do with me?" interrupted Adelaide, freely.

"It mightn't have, miss, only that an hour or two afterwards he was married to that young lady."

"What wild tale is this!" exclaimed Miss Mortimer; yet her heart sank like lead within her. "Be careful what you say; imposture is easily exposed."

"And I am not attempting imposture, miss," said Upton, quite unmoved; "you can prove every word I say. Lord Vivian and the young lady went away in a cab, and I followed. They drove down to this church"—(he laid on the table a slip of paper)—"and there they were married. I went into the church and saw it; and the next day, miss, I went down, and looked at the register, and these names were in the book."

Another slip was laid beside the first, and on it Adelaide Mortimer read—

"GRAHAME MAXWELL VIVIAN,"

"TERESA BRIDE TEMPLE."

She was white to the lips as she turned to her informant and said, calmly,—

"Upton, you shall have the money; and, mind, on your life, tell this secret to no one else. I will make it worth your while to remain silent."

The man readily agreed to remain silent, received his £30, and departed.

This, then, was the secret; this was why Lord Vivian shunned the woman his father had chosen for his bride! Who was this Teresa Temple who had come between Adelaide Mortimer and a coronet? That Miss Mortimer would speedily ascertain, and then she would consider how to act; for it did not for a moment occur to the young lady that the matter was completely taken out of her hands. Revenge might still be hers, though the broad lands of Brington might be lost to her. She was a woman of many resources and few scruples, and to such there is no "impossible."

In order to obtain the necessary preliminary information Adelaide did not hesitate to employ the agency of a private inquiry office, and she was presently informed that Miss Teresa Temple was at present residing at Horne Bay with her aunt, Mrs. Dacre; also that the

young lady was remarkably handsome, and about seventeen years of age.

Adelaide smiled an evil smile when left alone. "I see it all; the girl even keeps her maiden name. The aunt knows nothing; very likely the girl does not know her husband's real position. You shall not cast me aside, Grahame Vivian, without trusing it bitingly!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SNAKE UNDER THE THRESHOLD.

"So that is Grahame Vivian's wife?"

A Bath-chair, in which sat an old gentleman, had been drawn up for a few moments on the parade at Horne Bay, and a tall, fair woman who walked beside the chair, had paused, looking at a girl who was reclining on the beach a few yards off—a very young girl, in a blue and red serge dress, with masses of short curls clustering over her head, and a face of rare beauty.

"Who is that lady?" Miss Mortimer had asked the Bath-chair man, and was answered—"Her name's Temple, mum; she's here with her aunt, Mrs. Dacre."

Adelaide set her teeth hard. She paused a moment, then turned and sauntered towards the girl. Teresa looked up as she heard the step on the shingles, and immediately divined that this was the "Miss Mortimer" whose arrival with her father had been duly chronicled in that week's "local."

What had brought such fashionable people as the Mortimers to Horne Bay was matter for universal conjecture; Teresa alone was supremely indifferent on the subject. So she looked up carelessly at the woman she had unconsciously out-rivalled, and that woman would have willingly annihilated her. Adelaide spoke pleasantly—she could be frank and gracious in her manner when she pleased.

"Pardon me," she said, "but could you tell me if it is at all pretty westwards? My father and I have been the other way, and now we want to explore a new direction."

"It isn't a bit pretty that way," said Teresa, smiling; and as she raised herself, resting on her gloved left hand, Adelaide noticed that there was no wedding-ring upon it. "It is very ugly and bleak and dull—though not much more dull than the whole place."

"You don't like it, I see?" said the girl, laughing.

"It does not seem very attractive, certainly," assented Miss Mortimer. "I suppose there is nothing going on here?"

"Only the sea and the north-east wind," responded Irish Teresa, enigmatically.

Adelaide laughed at this reply, and continued the conversation till fully ten minutes had elapsed in an interchange of remarks; then Miss Mortimer declared she must join her father, but "hoped they would meet again."

Teresa hoped so too. Acquaintance ripens fast at the seaside, especially between those who find themselves in some out-of-the-way or desolate situation, and spot the only two of kin in class and education.

Presently Teresa was introduced to Sir James Mortimer, who was instantly charmed with her; then Sir James and his daughter called on Mrs. Dacre, who was still unable to walk; and so Adelaide's point was gained.

Coming to Horne Bay was his daughter's idea, Sir James one day explained to Teresa. She thought it would be quiet and out of the way for him; they did not want to be troubled by a lot of acquaintances, and it was so difficult to go anywhere without meeting people you knew.

One evening—the two families had known each other three weeks, and were on quite friendly terms, though Teresa did not, in her heart, really like Miss Mortimer—Adelaide was sitting with the aunt and niece in the drawing-room, and all three were chatting; the two girls principally; Mrs. Dacre—now cured of her sprain—was knitting; Adelaide and

Teresa idling. To-day had been a sunny one for the younger girl, for she had had her first letter from Grahame—from Malta—and though it only covered two sheets of paper, the reading of it had occupied her pretty well all the morning. She felt more amiable than usual towards Adelaide, with regard to whom she had that instinctive aversion which a true nature feels to a false one.

After a time the conversation turned upon the doings of the *beau monde*, and here Adelaide was mostly the informant, and Teresa listener and questioner. In the course of her remarks Adelaide casually mentioned "Lord Vivian," covertly watching Teresa, whose face, as she leaned back in the window seat, was in the full light of the gas, but there was no change in the girl's face.

"Lord Vivian?" repeated Mrs. Dacre, "he is the Earl of Errington's son, is he not?"

"Yes," said Adelaide, "and a very nice fellow he is. I hope he will come home with all his limbs sound."

"Where has he gone to get them broken?" asked Teresa, laughing.

"She does not know," thought Adelaide. "She is too young for such dissimulation." Aloud she said, "He has gone to Egypt; he is in the *Lancers*. His cousin Grahame is in the same regiment."

A swift flash of colour across Teresa's cheek told Adelaide that she had struck the right chord. She went on without seeming to look at the girl. "But Grahame is a very different man from Vivian—a very handsome fellow. Men of his sort often are, I find."

"What is against him?" asked Teresa, indifferently; but she turned her head to look out of window.

"What is against him?" Adelaide opened her eyes and laughed. "What is not against him? He is a thorough *roué*; even men allow him to be fast. There are all sorts of stories current about Grahame Vivian."

Still not a word from Teresa; her head was turned resolutely towards the sea. Of course this must be her Grahame of whom Adelaide was speaking. There could hardly be three Vivians—two of them of the same Christian name—in one regiment; equally, of course, he could not be the *roué* Adelaide said he was. But it gave the girl a kind of shock to hear such words; they made her feel keenly what Adelaide's conversation had made her feel more vaguely several times before—that, after all, she knew very little of the world, very little of men. The fashionable code of honour was not at all her standard. Adelaide seemed to take as a matter of course things that horrified her.

Mrs. Dacre remarked,—
"No doubt these stories are not edifying," and she glanced towards her niece as she spoke.

"Edifying?"—Miss Mortimer smiled—"why, no, hardly. His latest escapade—"

She paused suddenly, and closed her lips. Teresa, not looking at her, could not see the expression of her face, but the pause made the girl's heart stand still. Could Adelaide have any idea of the truth? Teresa dared not turn round just yet, but the silence was awful. She broke out abruptly,—

"I dare say Grahame Vivian is no worse than most men; people always paint grey black."

"I don't think," said Adelaide, slowly, it seemed somewhat reluctantly, "that there is much grey in Grahame Vivian—it is all black. Still," correcting herself, "he may not be as bad as some say."

She changed the subject; but after that there was a noticeable constraint in the conversation. Adelaide seemed like a person who has made some painful discovery and is anxious to hide the fact. Teresa felt on the brink of a volcano. Miss Mortimer knew something, she was convinced, about the marriage, and she would certainly tell Mrs. Dacre.

It was a relief when Adelaide went; but it did not mend matters. Teresa passed a sleepless night. She did not believe what had been

said of her husband; but a tiny seed of doubt had been sown. After all, what had she known of Grahame Vivian? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Still, he was no profligate; that was impossible.

She took out his photograph and looked at it till her eyes were blinded with tears; but it did not need the picture to see the noble loyal face. What would Aunt Mildred do, the girl thought in a kind of despair, when she knew the truth? It would be cruel in Adelaide to tell it; but she would think it her "duty," and people who acted from a sense of "duty" usually did cruel things.

Had she (Teresa) been wrong in marrying secretly? Ought she to have denied her lover's prayer? So she tortured herself all night long; but she braced herself for the inevitable. Sooner or later—probably sooner—Mrs. Dacre would be told that her niece had secretly married a portionless *roué*.

"Perhaps she will turn me out," said the girl to herself, wearily. "I know where to go if she does; but it would be very dreadful."

Before parting from his young wife Vivian had given her the address of his solicitors, and told her to apply to them in the event of Mrs. Dacre discovering that her niece was married, and banishing her from her house, or making her home insufferable; but he besought the girl to bear as much as she could, for she was too young to live without proper protection. Still, if the worst came, Teresa was not utterly without resources.

Suspense is, of all the ills that flesh is heir to, the most intolerable; well has the poet said of it—

"The human soul
That can sustain despair, endures not thee."

Most terrible is it to nervous, energetic temperaments; yet all next day Teresa was doomed to bear the burden of suspense. She would have preferred, a thousand times, that the storm should burst at once, since burst it must. She could not settle to anything, and at length she went out, and for hours wandered about the cliffs, nor till it was almost dark did she return home. As she ascended the steps she saw that the gas had not yet been lighted in the drawing-room; that was an ominous sign.

She went straight in with a beating heart, and entered the drawing-room. No one was there. She walked to the window, throwing off her hat, and as she did so, the door opened, and her aunt's voice, always hard and metallic, but now with a tone in it that sounded "merciless," said,—

"Teresa, are you there?"
Teresa knew all now; she needed nothing more.

"Yes," she said, turning round, "I am here."

"Draw down the blind," said Mrs. Dacre, and the girl obeyed.

Her aunt struck a match, lighted the gas, and then Teresa saw that her face was livid. Resting her hand on the table, fixing her cold eyes on the beautiful young face opposite to her, she began,—

"I have heard to-day, Teresa, a strange, an almost incredible story. If it is true, you have deceived me most wickedly; you have placed yourself in an awful position. Is it true that on the —th of last month you went to London, met Grahame Vivian, Lord Errington's cousin, and were married to him at St. Antholin's Church in Lambeth?"

"Yes," said Teresa, deadly white, but not blenching an inch.

Mrs. Dacre had evidently got over the first stage—incredulous amazement—and had reached the grim and stony stage, but that quiet affirmative staggered her; perhaps she had expected denial or evasion. She stared at her niece blankly for a moment. After that she recovered herself and went on,—

"Was that the man you met—more than once evidently—when you were at school?"

"Yes," said Teresa again.

"And you and he between you," Mrs. Dacre continued, "concocted a telegram purporting

"to come from a friend yours; and you pretended to be anxious for your friend when you knew the whole thing was a wretched lie."

"No," said the girl, flushing hotly now. "Captain Vivian sent that telegram. I thought it was genuine. I did not know even that he was in London till I saw him at Victoria Station. You do not believe me, perhaps, but that is the truth."

"It does not matter; one falsehood more or less would be of small consequence in a tissue of deceit. When Miss Mortimer came to me this afternoon and told me what you have confessed to me, I could not believe her. Her informant was a friend, whose servant had seen the marriage, and to whom Miss Mortimer had mentioned your name in a letter. Miss Mortimer rightly thought it her duty to mention the matter to me, hardly believing herself that you could be the Teresa Temple spoken of by her friend, and horrified to think that you had linked your fate to a reprobate such as Grahame Vivian is well known to be—a gambler, a *roué*, a man deeply involved in debt—this is the husband you have given yourself. To you, perhaps, the whole affair was a mere frolic, but a hasty and ill-assorted union can bring nothing but untold misery."

Mrs. Dacre paused for want of breath; she had spoken with a sledge-hammer energy far more exhausting than more fiery passion.

Teresa interpolated resolutely,—

"I don't believe that Captain Vivian is a *roué* and a gambler."

"What do you know of him? you a school-girl of seventeen. What do you know of the world? What means have you of forming a correct judgment? Any handsome, smooth-tongued man can impose upon you. Good heavens! the man may already have a wife living. If I had power to undo this wretched, disgraceful marriage, I would do it; but the thing is past undoing. You have wrecked your whole future for the sake of a mad-brained escapade. I thought you were flighty, and I find you downright wicked. To me you have been miserably ungrateful. I have taken every care of you, and this has been my reward. I tried to keep you from evil, and you have rushed headlong into it. Even now there is not a tear—not a sign of penitence. It will be more than you deserve if the man you have married is killed in this war."

"If he is killed," said Teresa, through her teeth, "I hope I shall die too."

"A foolish wish. You persist in believing him all he professed himself to be. But why this secrecy if there was no wrong?"

"The secrecy is only till he comes home," said the girl.

"For what reason?"

"That," said Teresa, "rests between him and me."

"Very well; you have made your bed, and you must lie on it. Affection is wasted on you."

"You never gave me affection," interrupted the girl, passionately. "You have given me clothes, food, and shelter, and nothing more. If I have been rash, you did nothing to save me from folly. I could not live without love, and love is the one thing I have never had from you."

"Go, then," cried Mrs. Dacre, her voice rising to a shrill, piercing tone, almost a shriek, with passion; "go to the profligate who professes to give you what I have denied. I wash my hands of you. I wish never to see your face again."

Words spoken in the heat of anger, under the sharp sting of conscience, repented of later when it was too late—when the proud, impetuous girl to whom they were uttered was lost in the whirlpool of London. For Teresa waited for no second dismissal. She went straight out of the room, and up to her own, packed a few necessities in a bag, and, an hour later, stole quietly out of the house. By the time Mrs. Dacre had sufficiently cooled to inquire after her the girl was in the metropolis, and Mrs. Dacre sat petrified by the knowledge that her angry words had been taken at their seeming

value, and remorse came all too tardily for action.

But the news that fell with so heavy a blow on Mildred Dacre was a glad hearing for Adelaide Mortimer. Admirably simulated were her grief and sympathy, but in her heart she laughed. Her scheme had succeeded even better than she had dared to hope. Teresa, maddened by the thought of her miserable fate, stung to the quick by her aunt's reproaches, had fled—no one knew whither; she herself perhaps hardly knew where she was going, what she intended to do, and when Grahame Vivian returned home he would seek in vain for his bride. Certainly revenge was sweet, and no compunction for the heartless part she had played visited Miss Adelaide Mortimer.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD VIVIAN.

Not wandering about in search of work that never came, dwelling at night in some unsavoury garret, feeding on bread and water, as Miss Adelaide Mortimer charitably imagined, did Teresa Vivian pass her days after her flight from Herne Bay, but in a comfortable house in Brunswick-square, under the wing of Mr. Bonham, Captain Vivian's solicitor, and his warm-hearted wife.

Here she read her husband's letters, for of course she had told him of all that had passed, and he had enjoined her not to tell her aunt where she was; he had good reasons for the injunction, but of Adelaide he said nothing. Of course Teresa devoured the war news, but sought in vain for her husband's name. Gallant deeds were done by Lord Vivian, deeds—one especially, when he carried away a wounded comrade in the face of fifty foes fighting at every step till he gained shelter—that made her cheek glow and her heart beat, but Grahame Vivian's name never appeared. On one point, however, her mind was at rest; for she asked Mr. Bonham about Grahame Vivian's evil repute, and he said there must be some mistake. Lord Errington had a cousin, Henry Vivian, who was certainly a *roué*; but his name was not Grahame at all. Henry was not even in the army.

"Any news, Teresa?" asked Mrs. Bonham, one evening, as the girl was reading the *Evening Standard*, just brought in.

"Not much—oh!" she said, suddenly, "Lord Vivian has been wounded."

"Not dangerously, I hope?" asked the lady, hastily.

"No, they say not—but the doctors think he will not be able to go into active service again during this campaign, poor fellow!"

But still no news of Grahame Vivian, save in his own letters. Why did all the glory fall to Lord Vivian's share? A fortnight later a telegram from Egypt announced that Lord Vivian was coming home on sick leave, his wound being of such a nature that exertion would produce internal hemorrhage. Mrs. Bonham smiled to herself when she read the telegram, but it had very little interest for Teresa.

One bright morning she had been to change a book at the library, and when she returned she asked where Mrs. Bonham was.

"In the drawing-room—with a visitor, miss," returned the servant, and Teresa, therefore, went straight up to her own room, and took off her things. Almost immediately she heard the drawing-room door open, and Mrs. Bonham called her name. She ran down at once.

"A visitor for you, my dear," said the good lady.

"For me, Mrs. Bonham—I know no one."

"You know this one, I think," said Mrs. Bonham, and something in her face and her voice made the girl's heart leap up with a wild throb. Mrs. Bonham hurried away, but Teresa opened the drawing-room door, and a tall bronzed man turned to her, opening his arms.

"Grahame!"

She was locked to her husband's breast clinging to him, speechless, dizzy with wild joy, and Grahame Vivian felt that even years of severance would be redeemed by such a moment as this.

Then, after this first rapture, followed the inevitable explanations, as they sat side by side, the strong arm still enfolding the slender form.

"And you are not badly wounded, Grahame?" was Teresa's first question, even before she asked why he had not written.

"No, darling—that is, I must be quiet for some months to come. Any great exertion now would produce internal bleeding, and cause immediate death!"

"Then, Grahame"—she lifted her head with a perplexed look—"there was a mistake in the telegram; it was you, not Lord Vivian, who was wounded like that." The young man smiled down very quizzically in the earnest face.

"You have given me a puzzle to solve, sweet wife," he said. "I don't know how it could very well be me and not Lord Vivian."

"Don't jest, Grahame; what do you mean?"

"That I am Lord Vivian, sweetheart."

"You! Grahame, Lord Vivian! Oh, Grahame!" She threw her arms round his neck, and hid her face with a quick sob of joy, not grief; "then it was my own husband who won such glory. Oh, if I had only known it then!"

"My noble-hearted wife, you make me prouder of you than ever!" said Vivian, huskily. No thought of rank or wealth or station had filled up for her the cup of happiness, but the knowledge that her husband had won glory and renown.

"Death or glory!" she whispered, with a tremulous smile, "and it has been glory. Oh! Grahame, I am so happy—so very happy."

She was quite content to wait until he should explain everything to her; indeed, she was in no hurry to have explanations; but he gave them, though after how long a space of time neither of them ever knew.

He told her how his father was bent on his marrying Adelaide Mortimer, and how he was equally bent on not marrying her; but he did not like to openly oppose his father, who loved him dearly. For that reason he feared to tell his real position to his "ain true love," for he knew she would refuse to meet him if his suit was against his father's wishes and would bring trouble into his family; for the same reason she would have refused to marry him.

He had, therefore, practised a pardonable deception upon her, and married her, knowing that when he returned from a campaign his father would be ready to forgive anything; and if he fell, the old man would pardon any error of his, and receive his wife as a daughter.

"And now," Vivian added, "even his eyes must be open to Adelaide Mortimer's true character. She played a traitor's part, Teresa. She knew it was Lord Vivian you had married; she knew Henry Vivian's name was not Grahame, and that he was not in the army. She hoped to be revenged on us both—that you should fly from your home, believing yourself the wife of a villain; and that I, when I returned, should find myself wifeless. It was because of Adelaide's implacable enmity that I did not want you to tell your aunt where you were. She might have told it again to Adelaide, and I should feel safer that, till I could protect you, she believed her revenge secured."

He asked Teresa afterwards more particularly concerning what had passed between herself and her aunt; and one expression especially made him smile.

"A hasty and ill-assorted union?" he said. "Well, hasty it was, but I wonder if Aunt Mildred would now call it 'ill-assorted'?"

Teresa laughed, and shook her head.

"No," she said, "and I think Minerva would forgive me for meeting you at midnight in the shrubbery if she knew *who* it was I met."

Certainly, Mrs. Dacre did forgive her headstrong niece. Certainly, she was wont to say

that Teresa's rashness was not one whit diminished by the results which she had not anticipated; a leap in the dark is not the less foolish because once in a while the experiment is a success; still, Teresa, wife of a *roué* with nothing a year, and Teresa, Lady Vivian, prospective Countess of Errington, were two very different people, and Mrs. Dacre would have been amiable enough if she had received any encouragement. She soon found cause, however, to regret her harshness to Teresa.

Neither the girl nor her husband bore her any malice; but cordiality was out of the question, and Aunt Mildred decided that gratitude was among the virtues never practised by the youth of the nineteenth century—that is, of the latter half.

Adelaide Mortimer's punishment was even more severe, for Lord Vivian himself wrote to her, and told her how completely her treachery was known to him, and how little it had availed her; but worse than this was it to see herself supplanted by the beautiful Lady Vivian, not only in Lord Vivian's affections, but in the firmament of society.

Truly curses come home to roost, and revenge turns to Dead Sea fruit in the month. But Grahame Vivian often reminds his young wife of that meeting at Victoria Station and secret marriage in the little mission church.

"And you have not repented of it yet?" he will say; "nor have I; but we ought to, both of us, for you know, Teresa, it was a hasty and ill-assorted union."

[THE END.]

SNOWDROP'S FORTUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WOODED AND WON.

"Come in and sit down, Fortescue," the Earl said with a strange agitation in his manner, "and tell me just what you mean; I think I hardly understand you."

"I mean what I say," the young man replied. "I have seen my lost cousin, your dead wife, Lord Wrexham, just as I saw her for the last time in life, dressed as she was then, and looking me straight in the face with the same sweet smile that stole my heart. I thought that nothing could move me now. I am a very woman still when I think of that miserable time."

"Before I ask you one single question about what you have seen or imagined," the Earl said, gently laying his hand on Arthur Fortescue's shoulder, "let me say one word about that time: as I am a living man I had no idea of your love for Geraldine; if she knew it she never told me. I did not know I was wronging any man by making her my wife; that I did so in secret was due to circumstances which you know of now; her death came out of them too."

"And saved you from a crime, my lord; but it is all past now and nothing can undo it. Why has she come back again after all these years?"

"My dear Fortescue, you must be ill to indulge such a fancy, the dead cannot come back. Where did you see whoever it was you mistook for her?"

"At Olderton's." Mr. Fortescue replied, naming an hotel much affected by country families; it was comfortable, well-situated, and well managed, and always full. "I had gone there to see a fellow from Malvern who is there dancing attendance on his mother and sisters, and I had to wait for him. I am pretty much at home at Olderton's; my people always used the place when I was a lad, and I just waited in the corridor; that corridor is one of the features of the place, you know, full of curiosities and nice lounges and plants and things, and—"

"And other people were there, I suppose, and

the lady amongst them; as I live, Fortescue, it has left you trembling like a girl."

"I don't feel myself while I think of it. It was getting dusk and I was sitting on one of the sofas in a recess, wondering when my fellow would come in, and wishing they would come and light the lamps that I might look at a wonderful piece of carving there is there, brought from some savage place or other, when I heard a sigh—a soft gentle one, and I looked up to see Geraldine standing before me, right in front of me she was, with a white dress on, and her hair, such beautiful hair she had, falling all down over her shoulders just as it used to do. She looked straight at me as if she had something to say, and then, all on a sudden the look in her eyes changed to terror, and she was gone, how I don't know, for I never heard a footstep nor the sound of a door anywhere."

"Some young lady staying in the place—no ghost, Fortescue; you were thinking of the past, perhaps."

"Nothing was farther from my thoughts, I was wholly in the present; I went straight to the head waiter and asked him what ladies there were in the house; there are only five, the mother and sisters of the man I went to see—two besides, the wife and daughter of the man from Australia, Sir Hilary Glenormond."

"And might it not have been one of these?"

"My dear fellow, I had a chance of seeing that delectable personage and he is a digger all over; well dressed and tolerably well mannered; that is, he is clean in his language, has the grace to be quiet. His womenfolk are quite unrepresentable."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I gathered as much from the waiter. Indeed I saw her ladyship; a curious, awkward-looking woman, who looks as if she were wearing someone else's clothes, and finding them very uncomfortable; she hardly shows at all, and the daughter still less. I can quite fancy what the child of such parents must be."

Arthur Fortescue spoke in all good faith, and had no idea he had seen Nellie Glenormond; it was indeed that young lady who had stood before him for that brief minute, and recalled so forcibly that love he had lost when he was a lad. Her dark hair and eyes and her white dress, added doubtless to some train of thought into which he had unconsciously fallen, had conjured up the vision he had imagined.

Sir Hilary and his family had taken up their quarters at Olderton's on the advice of someone who knew the place, and what was likely to suit the simple folk from the colonies, and the baronet had installed his wife and daughter in comfortable apartments there, that they might get accustomed to the ways of London, as he put it, and learn not to feel awkward when they met people.

They had been going about to all sorts of unfashionable places, and seeing all sorts of commonplace sights, to their great satisfaction, and to the disgust of Mr. Sayers, to whom they had not been introduced, in spite of his manoeuvres, and his wife's leaving her card on them.

The baronet's application to him on a matter of business was accidental, and to use his own expression, he measured the lawyer up the first time he saw him, and pronounced him a very useful man in business, but not to be trusted, and he had a special reason for not trusting him.

"I'm not going to have my girl and you trotted out by his old woman," he said to his wife when she would have remonstrated with him, and hinted that perhaps she and Nelly might get on better with a person of Mrs. Sayers' standing in the world than with someone at the very top of the tree, at any rate, at first. "It shall be the best or none for my girl, and I'm not going to have that fellow's wife prying about my place, picking up all she can get hold of."

"But suppose the best people won't have

us," Lady Glenormond suggested, and her lord laughed.

"They'll come to the sound of this like flies to honey," he said, jingling a few coins in his pocket; this and a name that has been to the fore since the Conqueror—though I'm not very sure who he was—are enough. You'll have no lack of great society whenever it pleases your ladyship to show yourself."

He was quite right, this unsophisticated colonist—the rattle of the gold and the ancient name would be sure to attract everybody; and his wife's ignorance and his own mistakes would be called pleasant eccentricities, and excused in every possible way. As for his daughter, he was confident she would find her proper place as soon as she was seen; her beauty would excuse everything that was not quite to the taste of the ultra-refined people he had come amongst, and her sweet temper and amiable manners would make her a favourite at once.

"To say nothing of the money," he said, laughing; "she might be a female fiend and as ugly as sin, it won't matter so her purse is full."

The waiter had no notion of leading Mr. Fortescue into such a blunder; he could have told him that Miss Glenormond was beautiful—it was altogether an accident. Nellie herself had been quite as much startled as the gentleman at seeing him there; she had no idea there was anyone in the recess when she took her stand opposite to it. And the sight of Arthur Fortescue sent her away as much frightened and agitated as the gentleman himself.

Her face was as white as his when she reached the rooms they occupied, and her father asked her what was the matter.

"I was startled, father, that was all," she replied. "I came upon a gentleman in the passage outside, and nearly fell over him before I saw him; I think I startled him, too; he looked frightened."

"Anyone you know, my lass?"

"I think so, father, a shadow of the past; perhaps we shall see him again."

And in her heart of hearts she wished she might.

Lord Wrexham felt anything but fit to join his wife at Lady Garnet's ball, but he had promised, and he and Arthur Fortescue made their appearance together to the hostess's great delight.

The rooms were very full, and he had some difficulty at first in finding his womenkind, but at length Laura passed him, whirling round in a waltz on the arm of the Duke of Monks-haven. There was something in her face that made him start—a new happiness that had nothing to do with childhood, a womanly look that had not been there before; and he guessed that, in spite of what he had said to her mother, the word had been spoken, and she was to be Duchess of Monks-haven.

Lady Laura had done her best, but the Duke had made up his mind; and he was not to be kept away from the beautiful girl without more fuss and explanation than her mother thought well to enter into. Besides, Lord Wrexham had no objection; it was only that he did not wish Laura to be excited on this particular evening, when she had had excitement enough during the day. She could not forbid her dancing with him or prevent their going out on the balcony together, or into the conservatory where it was so deliciously cool, and yet where there were no draughts.

The Duke was not remarkable for his conversational powers, and rather apt to break down when he was talking to Laura's father; but with her he was eloquent enough, and she had learned to love him for himself and his many good qualities, as well as for his wealth and station.

Indeed, these last were not of very much account in her eyes. He would not lift her much in the social scale for all his strawberry leaves, and she had plenty of money of her own. She had come to know him, and appre-

ciate him; and his many amiable traits had endeared him to her before he ever spoke a word to her that would lead her to believe that he loved her.

So that when she was alone with him, after a giddy whirl of waltzing, and he held her hand, and told her how the dearest wish of his heart was to make her his wife, what could she say to him? She knew her parents liked him, and that they would approve of the match from every point of view, and she loved him—she had known that for some time—she would always love him, even if he never spoke, and she had to stifle her own feelings, and see him married to someone else.

There was no one to overhear them; they were as much alone in that quiet nook, with the fountain plashing at their feet, and the bustle and hum of the ball-room on the other side of the velvet curtains, as if they were in some country wood with the trees waving over their heads, and only Nature and her solitude around them.

A new dance was in progress; one which someone had brought from the wilds of Bavaria, where the peasants danced it to the sound of their native instruments, and the children sang it in untutored voices in the streets and lanes.

The band were playing an arrangement of "My Queen," and the words rose to the Duke's lips.

"And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping, Ere I cease to love her, My Queen, My Queen!"

"My queen," he repeated. "Say, Laura, is it to be?"

He gathered her to him as he spoke, sure of her answer; he knew she loved him, and when he spoke again there came a murmured reply that only love could hear, and he knew that he was blessed above all men in the possession of his jewel.

There was no one to see but the birds that twitted and looked in their cages, scared at the unwonted light in their beautiful home, and the stars that shone down upon them calm and clear through the glass, and he stooped his head and took the pledge of their compact from her rosy lips.

"Take me back to mamma," Lady Laura whispered, after a pause. "She will think I am lost."

"She will guess, my darling," the young man said. "She knows I have been waiting for this opportunity; I think I have loved you, Laura, ever since you were a wee child in short petticoats."

"Oh, you did not know me then," said Lady Laura. "No one ever saw me then; there was trouble of some sort in our home—papa's health I fancy—and I never went anywhere or saw anyone. The first time I ever saw you was at the Eton and Harrow match, and you did not present a dignified appearance on that occasion."

She laughed merrily as she spoke, and the Duke joined. He had been severely hit by a ball in some bungled movement, and his nose was swelled and bleeding when Lady Wrexham took pity on him, and comforted him by her sympathetic tact.

"I don't think it was your appearance that fascinated me then," Laura said; "it was not prepossessing. Take me back to the ball-room now, please."

"Say 'Marmaduke Charlton, I love you,' and I will take you at once."

"Have I not said it?"

"You have said 'Yes' when I asked you the question. Make a full confession of your own accord, and you shall go back to the pair of mothers; they are both waiting for you, remember."

And Laura lifted her great blue eyes to his face, and spoke the words that made him blessed beyond compare.

"Marmaduke, I love you," she said shyly, and hid her face on his breast as if it were her proper resting-place.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN SOCIETY.

"Dear Lady Wrexham, it seems ridiculous to say so, but she really is a little like our dear Laura."

So spoke the Duchess of Monksbaven, who was calling on Lady Wrexham as an duty bound, and claiming a sort of kinship with Laura already. The engagement was a settled and announced thing now. Whatever doubt or dread the Earl had concerning it had been put on one side, and the heiress was known to all the fortune-hunting men and marriageable young ladies to be betrothed. The former cursed their bad luck in having lost the chance of such a rich wife, and the latter wondered whatever the Duke could see in her more than in anyone else to choose her for a wife.

Lady Wrexham and the Duchess had not been very intimate up to this time; but this new bond brought them close together, and a very sweet and beautiful bond it was, her Grace declared.

For a wonder she was quite satisfied—very few mothers are when they hear of their sons choosing wives; Laura had completely won her by her gentle manner, and the grace with which she received her few words of welcome.

She was an austere woman in general, this Duchess of Monksbaven, and thought there was not such a family in the world as that of which her son was the head; and very few young ladies had been thought worthy to fill the post of honour at the castle where Dukes of Monksbaven had lived and died since William the Conqueror brought over his hordes of Norman ruffians and installed them in the best places in the land.

Laura was voted as near perfection as a young lady could be. She had name, rank, and means. There was nothing to gloss over in her lineage. Everyone knew the Wrexham pedigree, and her fortune was beyond dispute. Altogether, as the Duchess said, her son had managed very well, and she was very thankful. Marmaduke was just the sort of man to go and marry anywhere; he was so terribly radical in some of his ideas.

So every one was pleased who was any way concerned, and all went as merry as a marriage bell; and her Grace the Duchess came a gossiping to Connaught-gardens, and the theme of her discourse just now was Miss Glenormond. She had allowed herself to be introduced to Sir Hilary and his family, and declared herself delighted.

"They will be the eccentricities of the season, of course," she said; "but they are delicious. You cannot imagine anything like them unless you were to see them. They have taken Lord Arming's house in Eaton-square, and they are going to give a grand entertainment; they have asked me to preside."

"Shall you?" asked Lady Wrexham, curious like everybody else, about this new baronet who had so suddenly sprung from the uttermost ends of the earth.

"Well, I have hardly decided; it will be like taking an orang-outang by the hand and trying to teach it the ways of polite society to attempt that woman. I should say she had been a charwoman or something of that sort, but somehow I rather took to the girl, and, as I say, she is rather like our darling Laura."

"I don't like to hear that," Lady Wrexham said, with a little shiver, as she remembered the time when someone else was likened to Laura, and with such fatal reason; "I like to fancy my child unique in her beauty."

"And so she is, this young lady cannot compare with her for that," the Duchess said, eagerly, though in her heart she thought that Nellie Glenormond was quite as handsome as her son's intended wife. "My Guinevere saw another likeness in her which she declares is marvellous."

"The young lady must have rather a commonplace sort of beauty," Lady Wrexham remarked, "if she is like everybody."

"Not at all, my dear," the Duchess replied, "it really is a very striking face. Guinevere

says she is the image of a little girl she saw once in your company. You were at Warwick at the time, and a whole party of you went to the race-ground to see some shows."

"Yes, I remember," the Countess said, wondering why she felt so cold, and why the very mention of that time made her shiver. It was all over now, there was nothing in any chance resemblance; she remembered that the Lady Guinevere Charlton had been one of the guests on that memorable visit, and had made herself somewhat disagreeable because she was not particularly intimate with some of the guests. She had protested against the fair expedition as "vulgar," but had found her notion laughed at, and withdrawn it. She had made one of the merry band who had proceeded to the show ground and enjoyed herself as much as any one when she got there. What could the Duchess be going to say about that fair?

"There was a performing child there, Guinevere says, that did all sorts of wonderful things."

"Yes."

Lady Wrexham was stooping to pick up her pocket-handkerchief as she spoke, and her face was hidden from the Duchess, who was not on volubly; she had not had much a subject for gossip for some time as Sir Hilary Glenormond and his family.

"Guinevere says Miss Glenormond must be that child grown up, that the likeness is wonderful, and she remembers to some of them remarking how like that little girl was to dear Laura. I was half afraid she would ask the young lady whether she had ever danced outside a booth at a fair, she seemed so struck by the likeness. Dear Lady Wrexham, are you not well?"

"Not very, I think," the Countess said. "I have been sleeping badly lately, and that does not tend to make a person feel strong. Why do you ask?"

"Because you are so pale; you turned quite white while I was talking about this girl. Do I bore you?"

"On the contrary, I should like to hear everything there is to be told about the people; I should like to see them."

"So you shall, if I am to take them up, and Monksbaven wishes it; he says the baronet is very shrewd, and though he is rough he is not ill mannered, and you know the Staffordshire property joins the Glenormond lands, so altogether I am inclined to see what I can do with them."

(To be continued.)

FACETTE.

"My love," said one lady to another, "you heard, I suppose, that Emily is about to marry Arthur." "I know it," was the reply; "and what I can't understand is that a woman so intelligent as she is can consent to marry a man who is stupid enough to marry her."

"There is nothing like settling down," said the retired merchant confidently to a neighbour. "When I gave up business I settled down and found I had quite a fortune. If I had settled up I should not have had a farthing."

"Marry, I don't approve of your entertaining your sweetheart in the kitchen," said a lady to her servant. "Well, ma'am, it's very kind of you to mention it; but he's from the country, you see, ma'am, and I'm afraid he's too shy and awkward in his manners, ma'am, for you to like him to come into the parlour."

A Sinner convert to Christianity was urged by his employer to work on Sunday, but he declined. "But," said the master, "does not your Bible say that if a man has an ox or an ass that falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, he may pull him out?" "Yes," answered the convert; "but if the ass has a habit of falling into the same pit every Sabbath day, then the man should either fill up the pit or sell that ass."

PRACTICAL TEACHER.—"What takes place after the sailor enters the port?" No one answered. "Perhaps some one in the Press can tell me. Can you, George?" "Yes, sir." "Now listen, children. Well, George, after the sailor enters the port, then what?" "Then the port enters the sailor." And George knew, for had not his father been a sailor all his life?

A DIPLOMATIC ANSWER.—Lady Godiva: "But surely, doctor, you don't approve of those horrid æsthetic fashions in women's dress?" The Doctor: "My dear madam, so long as a woman is beautiful she may wear what she likes, for me; and if she can't, what does it matter what she wears?" (Lady G. thinks the doctor a most delightful person, and quite agrees with him.)

BISMARCK SOUP.—Bismarck is always represented in the German comic papers with a bald, awful head surmounted by three hairs, which will explain the following conversation in a Viennese restaurant.—"Hi, waiter—hi! I asked for Julienne, and here you've brought me Bismarck soup!"—"Bismarck soup, sir! There's no Bismarck soup on the bill, sir!"—"Of course it is. Don't you see those three hairs on the top of it?"

A WONDERFUL SIGHT.—A jolly jack-lar having strayed into a menagerie to have a look at the wild beasts, was much struck to see a lion and a tiger in the same den. "Why, Jack," said L to a mesamate, who was chewing a quid in silent amazement, "I shouldn't wonder if next year they were to carry about a sailor and a marine living peaceably together?" "Ay," said his married companion, "or a man and wife."

A SAILOR, calling upon a Liverpool goldsmith, asked him what might be the value of an ingot of gold as big as his arm. The shopkeeper, smelling a bargain, beckoned him into a back room, and primed him with grog. He then asked him to let him see the ingot. "Oh," said Jack, "I haven't got it yet, but I'm going to the diggings, and should like to know the value of such a lump before I start." The goldsmith didn't ask him to call on his return from the diggings.

MEMBERS of people were trying to gain admittance to the House of Commons. A member from the Midlands, a consequential sort of person, was pushing and crowding everyone in his endeavour to get in. A lady who was being subjected to his rough treatment, turned and said, "You will please not push me in that manner, sir." "Madame," said the man, stopping for a moment, and drawing himself up to his full height, "I am a member." "Oh, excuse me, sir," was the lady's reply. "I mistook you for a gentleman."

TIN FOIL.—The more honestly a man possesses the less he pretends to have. There is no slavery like ignorance, and there are none so free as those who have the most phiaith. The very best lesson that experience can teach us is how little we know. If you are happy don't try to prove it; sit down, keep still, and thank the Lord for it. Men often mistake their prejudices for reason, and their hypocrisy for virtue. Reason may forsake the head, but memory never forsakes the heart. If a pride ever falls in love it is with herself. It is quite possible that many saints who have flourished have forgotten more sins than they have ever repented of. There is a grate of coquetry in prudery, and women are phools just about in proportion that they are very beautiful. Man owes to his passions all there is of him, either of good or of evil. Every one has a kik for the dog with a tin little tied to his tale. There is oftentimes more policy in virtue than there is in honesty. The most unhappy man of all is the man who is vainest. It is a sad satisfaction to know that while there is but one out of ten who practises virtue, there is nine out of ten that praise it. There never has lived a man yet who has not been offered at least once an opportunity to better his condition.—Josh Billings.

SOCIETY.

CLARENCE, North Notts, the beautiful ancestral home of the Duke of Newcastle, which, phoenix-like, has grandly risen from the ashes of its former self, has been the scene of one of the most charming fancy fairs of the season. The attendance was both numerous and fashionable. The company present included almost the whole of the members of the Polham-Clinton family, with the young Duke, the Baroness Bolsover and Lady Ottoline Cavendish Bentinck, Earl Mauners, and an extensive contingent of the local clergy and gentry. Lord Edward Clinton, Lady Edward Clinton, the Duke of Newcastle, and his sister, Lady Florence Clinton, were not the least active among the many present who assisted at the pretty petty larceny practised with such delightful impunity on occasions of this kind.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES, at a late fancy fair, bought, among other purchases, a magnificent bouquet, for which she gave a couple of sovereigns. On the point of departing, a personal friend, who had been most indefatigable of disposing of articles at her stall, stopped the Princess, saying, "If you are going, will you let me have your bouquet and see what I will do with it?" Her Royal Highness complied with the request at once, whereupon the vendor promptly announced to the multitude crowding round her stall that flowers from the Princess's bouquet were on sale at ten shillings a piece, with only a limited number to be disposed of. In less than eight minutes thirty gentlemen had each one in his button-hole, and thirty golden half-sovereigns had been added to the funds of the charity.

MRS. FARR, BURNABY, apparently envious of the feats of her famous husband, has been astonishing the Alpine world by some determined climbing. Arriving at Courmayeur, shortly after it had witnessed the bringing down of the bodies of poor Balfour and his guide, Mrs. Burnaby calmly announced her intention of ascending Mont Blanc by the Col de Gant, a peak 11,000 feet high. This successfully accomplished, Mrs. Burnaby two days later determined to scale the same mountain by Les Aiguilles Grieses. This was even a more difficult task, involving a night in the snow. But the dauntless little lady went through with the work, and after a brief rest clambered the Grandes Forasses, which crown over the lovely valley in which Courmayeur nestles. This done, and there being apparently no more worlds to conquer, Mrs. Burnaby went on to Chamounix.

BAZAR AT DESART HOUSE.—In the policies of Desart House, kindly granted for the occasion by the Earl of Rosslyn, the patron of the society, a bazaar in aid of the Falkhead Choral Society recently took place. Notwithstanding the unfavourable character of the weather there was a good attendance at the opening ceremony. Among those present were Lord Loughborough, Hon. Alexander Fitzroy St. Clair Erskine, Miss Maynard, Lady Millicent St. Clair Erskine, Lady Sybil St. Clair Erskine, Lady Angela St. Clair Erskine, Captain Oswald of Dumfries and Miss Oswald, Provost Swan, &c. In the unavoidable absence of the Earl of Rosslyn, his eldest son, Lord Loughborough, who is fourteen years of age, made a capital opening speech, to the delighted surprise of all present. Lord Loughborough said he felt it a great honour to have been chosen by the society to open the bazaar in the place of his father, who was, unfortunately, prevented from being there. There were a great many older and wiser people in the assemblage that would have been more competent to do so than he was. As it was, he hoped they would excuse his youth and inexperience, and allow him to say that he felt the greatest interest in the object of the bazaar. In every age and country music had stood first among the arts, and the more civilized the people were the greater would be their appreciation for music. The speech was received with applause, and the bazaar was a great success.

STATISTICS.

THIRTY-FOUR THOUSAND emigrants have arrived at New York since the beginning of the year. The estimate is that the year's arrivals will not exceed 49,000, being much below the estimates based on the immense influx of last year.

THE population of Russia has increased very rapidly during the last dozen years, the total having mounted from 85,570,646 to 100,098,348, of which Russia in Europe contains 75,067,768; Poland, 7,219,077; Finland, 2,028,021; Siberia and Central Asia, 15,186,456.

THE various religious faiths in Austria are thus enumerated:—Roman Catholics, 17,698,818; Greek Church, 2,533,323; Armenians, 2,854; Old Catholics, 6,134; Eastern Greek Church, 492,088; Eastern Armenian Church, 1,454; Protestants following the Confession of Augsburg, 289,005; ditto, following the Helvetic tenets, 110,525; Anglican Protestants, 1,049; Mennonites, 731; Unitarians, 169; Jews, 1,005,394; different beliefs, 4,488; infidels, 8,333.

GEMS.

MAN cannot dream himself into a noble character; he must achieve by diligent effort.

WHAT must be shall be; and that which is a necessity to him that struggles is little more than a choice to him that is willing.

It is an admitted fact that men who use their brains live longer, other things being equal, than those who do not.

If our whole time was spent in amusing our selves, we should find it more wearisome than the hardest day's work.

TRUTH and love are two of the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together they cannot easily be withstood.

ATTENTION is to the stone what good influences are to the man; both polish while they reveal hidden beauties.

HONOUR is but the reflection of a man's own action, shining bright in the face of all about him, and from thence rebounding upon himself.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

QUEEN'S PUDDING.—One pint of fine sifted bread crumbs, one quart of milk, one cup of sugar, the yolks of four eggs, a piece of butter the size of an egg, bake until done (but do not allow it to become watery), and spread with a layer of jelly. Whip the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth with five tablespoonsful of sugar and juice of one lemon, spread on the top, and brown lightly. This is good with or without sauce. It is very good cold, served with rich cream.

LIGHT PASTE FOR PASTES AND CHEESECAKES.—Beat the white of an egg to a strong froth; then mix it with as much water as will make three-quarters of a pound of fine flour into a stiff paste; roll it very thin, then lay the third part of half-pound of butter upon it in little bits; dredge it with some flour left out at first, and roll it up tight. Roll it out again, and put the same proportion of butter; and so proceed till all be worked up.

SCALLOPED CAULIFLOWER.—Choose a cauliflower of medium size, boil it twenty minutes. Put into a saucepan one ounce of butter, half a gill of milk, and one ounce of bread crumbs. Add cayenne and salt to taste, and stir till the bread has absorbed the milk and butter. Beat an egg and add this to the sauce, but be sure that it does not simmer after the egg has been added. Butter a flat tin dish, take off the fine leaves of the cauliflower, and place them all round on it; break up the flower carefully and lay in the centre, making it as high as possible; pour the sauce over this, sprinkle a few bread crumbs on the top, and bake ten minutes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A STRANGE cloud of insects, two miles wide, passed over Woolwich recently. A dense mass, first of ordinary flies, then of drab-hued and light-winged insects, appeared across the Thames from the Essex meadows, and took half an hour in passing away to the southwest.

THE announcement upon his staff four Germans and one Italian as officers will not occasion surprise. It has long been suspected that his military dispositions were made under the direction of European officers. It is not probable, however, that the Government will think the matter one calling for official notice.

POOR London children are not such destructive beings among tempting flower-beds as generally supposed. During the last three months the Inner Temple Gardens have been open to the public every evening from 6 to 9 P.M., and although thousands of children have poured into the gardens from the crowded neighbourhood, not one single instance of damage or injury of any kind has been reported.

MAKING MONEY.—Why some men are so eager to make money is a problem; they certainly do not spend it freely. They care nothing for the good things of life. They seem to value money for its own sake. Most men start in life with a bright object before them, the means for attaining which is money, and so they resolve to make money. But the means push the end out of sight. A new fascination springs up, which banishes the younger dream. The real pushes the ideal from its seat. Money acquires or seems to acquire, a value of its own; it becomes both means and end, and making it grows into a habit seldom lost. The proverb says, "Use is second nature," and it is fully proved, when the natural desire of men for happiness is obliterated by the habit of making money.

FALSE SENTIMENT.—It is false sentiment which leads a girl to shrink from working for a living, even though she sufficed for the money to supply her needs, and must pinch and save and contrive to dress well on the smallest possible income. The noble army of working women, who of all women best demonstrate their *raison d'être* is in general a despised army; and while society applauds the woman who is an artist, an editor, an author, it does so by calling her a genius, and setting her out of that grand corps where she legitimately belongs. Families with three, four, or five daughters, whether there are sons or not, if the father can possibly support them, are brought up to do nothing but help mother a little!

CURIOUS CUSTOM.—Curious as are many of the customs of land tenure in England, none is more curious than that by which one of the great City guilds for many years held a considerable estate, and which has just been brought to light after long disuse. The estate was left to the company by one of its liverymen very many years ago, on condition that once a year, on a certain day, the master and wardens should visit the tomb of their benefactor, and, after knocking thereon thrice, ask the question, "John Smith, how are you?" The ceremony, like most civic formalities, was always followed by a sumptuous banquet, at which the memory of their patron was drunk by the company. This continued until a few years ago, when some wag, hearing of this strange proceeding, concealed himself in a convenient corner behind the tomb, and when the usual question was asked, replied in a sepulchral tone, "Very cold, very cold!" The officials are said to have beaten a hasty retreat; and, as there was no possibility of any claimant arising to sue for forfeiture on the ground of non-compliance with the conditions of the bequest, the custom was discontinued. But the banquet still goes on.

SALLIE.—It is not advisable for a girl to marry a man who drinks on the supposition that he will reform after marriage. Nor should she marry one man while she loves another one more. It would be best for you to wait a few years and see if things will not shape themselves so that you can marry a man whom you dearly love, and who is worthy of a good wife.

LEWIS.—If your parents will not permit you to go away from home you must abide by their decision, making the best of the opportunities you have to advance in your study and practice. They probably know what is best for you, and in time you will come to see that the wisest course is the one they have laid out for you.

T. D.—There is no reason why you should not continue the correspondence if you choose to do so. The gentleman has been very frank with you in admitting his mistakes and wishing further explanations deferred until his visit. In the meantime the correspondence may be resumed in the same friendly spirit in which it was carried on before. The stand you have taken that there must be an undoubted preference is a good one, and you should adhere to it. Many instances on record in which

LAZARUS.—There are many instances on record in which the Duke of Wellington spoke in the highest terms of the military genius of Napoleon, and we have never met with an instance in which he was degraded as a warrior. Men who are really great do not apt to disparage each other, and you should remember that Napoleon never met except at Waterloo, and that their many victories were gained, not over each other, but over commanders inferior to either of them.

Aston.—The first thing for him to do is to tell the young lady, in the kindest manner possible, just exactly what the truth of the matter is with regard to his feelings. If she should hold him to his promise after that, he would either have to keep the engagement or else take the consequences of breaking it.

T. N.—1. The clerk could be prosecuted for embezzlement of funds entrusted to him. He might set up the defence that he was allowed to overdraw his account, but he had ever been permitted to do so before. From a course, if you take money on account, in any form, from a defaulter, you debit yourself from criminally procuring him, because you acknowledge, by accepting his money, that the man did not commit a crime in taking it. The compounding of a felony has serious penalties annexed to it by law.

PAUL F.—1. The essential of a contract is a real consideration on both sides. 2. Yes, unless the services are to be performed within one year, in which case a verbal contract is binding. If you only sign the contract you bind yourself to perform the services, while you leave the other party free to employ anyone else, who may offer to do the work more cheaply.

JANE B.—Ink stains on mahogany or black walnut furniture may be removed by touching the stains with father wet in a solution of nitre and water—the spot disappears in a spoonful of water. As soon as the cloth wet in cold water, rub the place at once remain, repeat, making If the ink-stains then are not removed, repeat, making the solution stronger. Silica that is not in use may be kept from tarnishing by burying it in a box or barrel of oatmeal.

W. R. S.—Do not be so anxious to win anybody's love. So much anxiety is almost certain to defeat its object. Nor should you be so lavish of your attentions; it—many of them are apt to nullify the good effect. The fact or rather to prevent a good effect altogether. The fact is, a youth must conduct himself in this, as in all other matters, in a sensible and manly way, if he would succeed.

MINIATURE.—The pyramids of Egypt are thirty-eight in number, and stretch along the western reach of the Nile Valley for a distance of some fifty geographical miles, from nearly opposite Heliopolis to beyond the site of Memphis. Get your atlas and study up this part of the world, and then try to get a grasp of some good cyclopaedia to read about the pyramids. Of the thirty-eight pyramids there is but one *true* pyramid. This is the Great pyramid, the most northern one—the "Great Pyramid." Thirty-four are imitations, and three are hardly deserving of mention.

MICHAEL D.—1. Milesian is a term sometimes applied to the Irish, and is based upon Irish legendary history, which claims that 1,300 before Christ, King Milesius of Spain had two sons who conquered Ireland and established there an order of nobility, the descendants of which were the Milesians. A native of Milan in Italy is called a *Milanese*, 2. When you mention another person, is called a *Milord*, in connection with yourself, you should mention yourself *last*; as, my cousin and I, instead of my cousin and my cousin. It may be eaten

M. F.—There is no season for lobster. It may be eaten all the year round, neither is there any poisonous part to a lobster. The stomach of a lobster—often called the “lady”—is tough and indigestible, and the bluish vein which may be found along the back and tail often produces sickness and is had better be avoided ; neither of these parts are poisonous. Lobsters are fattest from April to October. To make lobster salad, you could use the fanned lobster and so save yourself considerable trouble, it should be taken out of the first-class cook before using. Where a lady has not a first-class cook is obliged to make such dishes herself, she does well to study convenience and the saving of a possible hour.

MARY.—The term "pickle" signifies any kind of salted or acid liquor in which flesh or vegetables are preserved. We can find no recipe for the preservation of cucumbers in whisky or alcohol, although ale or ale-vinegar is sometimes employed.

SAM CHIEF.—The first Derby was run for on Thursday, May 4th, 1780, over a hundred years ago. It was, and then, however, mentioned in the records of that year. It was scarcely reckoned in the greatest annual events. Since the year 1838 it has always been run in connection with the 1838 second day of the meeting, which is held at Epsom Downs. The Earl of Derby founded this great national race, and its name.

L. G. O.—Be sturdily independent, but to insist upon giving an equivalent for all favours bestowed renders the transaction rather mercenary. Take the favours in the loving spirit in which they are given, and make it a point to repay them in like loving manner, but don't have it that it is a repayment.

SINKER.—The greatest depth of the Atlantic Ocean, determined by the *Challenger* soundings, was 3,875 fathoms, or about 4.4 miles; but that was of a limited depression, about 100 miles to the north of St. Thomas. Outside of that exceptional region hardly any portion of the Atlantic exceeds 3,000 fathoms in depth, or a little over 21 miles.

Just for a woman a dead boy lies
In the grass by the murmuring stream,
And but for the stare in his sad, blue eyes
And the hole in his curls, it would seem
He was lying there in a dream.

The cowslips, kissing the cold, white face
With diamond dew, glisten and weep,
And out from the dusky forest-place
The timorous squirrels peep ;
But the boy never stirs in his sleep.

Oh, ask of the rivulet gurgling by
How they met at the dawn of the day,
Dark shadows against the eastern sky—
The shot, and the flash, and the gray
Smoke that circled and drifted away!

The red, curving lips are half-parted, as though
The name that he loved lingered there—
The name of a woman that leaped with flow
Of the blood from his heart like a prayer,
And died in a gasp on the air.

Just for a woman a dead boy lies
In the grass 'neath the stars' cold light;
But, oh, could he see the laughter-lit eyes
And the gem-covered bosom so bright
Of a lady who dances to-night!

MIND.—In order to rid yourself of the objectionable pimples on your face, it will be necessary to lead a plain life, abstaining from the use of fatty food of any description, at the same time placing yourself in the hands of a competent physician, who will prescribe remedies calculated to purify your blood. Having accomplished this, your skin will be both cleared and softened, without resorting to any of the advertised nostrums claiming the power of beautifying the complexion.

SARA J.—The lady had a perfect right to refuse the book upon the grounds provided by any gossip acquaintance, who, if they felt inclined, might place her in an unenviable position before her friends. If you were engaged the aspect of the case would be different. You were wrong in allowing your anger to overbalance your good judgment, as the lady gave you specific reasons for her refusal of the gift. Do not allow a circumstance of such a trivial nature to destroy the happiness of years.

S. P. T.—If, after your engagement, you wish to visit a place of public amusement, a concert, or an evening party, you should not accept an invitation to go with gentlemen other than your lover, excepting in the case of a near relative. To accept any other escort, without the consent of your intended husband, would be considered improper. Ladies, after an engagement to marry, should be very cautious of receiving any close attention from other gentlemen; for, as you are probably aware, lovers are naturally jealous of any such attentions, however innocent or frivolous they may be.

SAINTS.—The repairing of silver on the back of a looking-glass has hitherto been considered a very difficult and delicate operation. In the "Proceedings of the Polytechnic Society of Leipzig" is found the following: Clean the bare portion of the glass by rubbing it gently with fine cotton, being careful to remove all grease or dirt, as if this is not done thoroughly defects will appear around the place repaired. With the point of a knife around the back of another looking-glass around a portion of the silvering of the required size, but slightly larger. Upon it place a small drop of mercury; a surface equal to that of the finger-nail. The mercury spreads off immediately, penetrates the amalgam to where it is cut with the knife, and the required space may now be removed and the required portion desire to repair. lifted. This is really the delicate part of the operation. Then dress lightly with cotton and the renewed portion appears as hard as almost immediately, and the glass appears as good as new.]

J. R.—The following cement for aquaria is highly recommended. Take 10 parts by measure of litharge, 10 parts plaster of Paris, 10 parts dry white sand, and 1 part finely-powdered resin, and mix them with boiled linseed oil. This use, into a stiff sticky paste with boiled linseed oil. This cement will stick to wood, stone, metal or glass, and hardens under water. On account of its resistance to the effects of salt water, it is a capital preparation for marine aquaria. Do not use the aquarium for two or three days after it has been cemented.

[illegible]

Bess.—Dissolve a small quantity of gutta-percha in chloroform in quantity sufficient to make a fluid of chloroform-like consistency. When spread it will dry in a few hours-like common glue. When spread together at moments. Heat the surfaces to be cemented together at a fire or over a flame until softened, and apply them to each other. This is the compound, and it is waterproof, and will resist invisible patches. It is waterproof, and will answer almost anywhere except when exposed to heat, which quickly softens it.

D. Y. F.-Polo may be described as "hockey" on horseback. It is of Asiatic origin, and was introduced into Europe in 1873 by some cavalry officers who had been in India. Two goals, as for football, are set up about 850 yards apart, and the object is to drive a ball, about the size of those used in cricket, through the goal by striking it with long sticks having crooked ends. The players are mounted on ponies, and a bent end of the stick is used to strike the animals. Great deal depends on the skill with which the animals are managed. Four or five on a side is the usual number playing, and those scoring the greatest number of goals win the game. The players are called "stinging-trees."

M. J. Y. You refer doubtless to the "stinging tree." It is not really a tree, but a luxuriant shrub. Its height varies from two inches to a foot and six. It is common to various parts of Australia, especially in the colony of Queensland. Proximity to this strange shrub may be divined by the peculiar odor which it emits, and it is avoided as a reptile would be. To come in contact with it, even as a reptile would be stung; an experience which people care so lightly to incur more than once; and which often causes animals to go mad. The stinging leaves no mark, but causes a maddening pain; and for many months the affected part is sensitive to water and to dampness.

N. T.—1. The terms man and woman mean those who have arrived at the stature and development, and somewhat of the dignity of maturity—the female of eighteen or twenty, and the male of twenty or twenty-two or twenty, and “young gentleman,” in the sense in which they are generally used, are polite appellations, and which they are generally applied to girls and boys than to individuals are more often applied to girls and boys than to individuals of maturer years. 2. Any woman who respects herself and has a proper regard for the feelings and rights of others is a lady, no matter what her station may be. 3. The difference between pride and conceit is that one may be laudable, while the other never is. A man may be proud of his family, of his wealth, or of his attainments. The conceited man is opinionated, thinks he is superior to his fellows, and imagines himself possessed of talents which will enable him to accomplish what others have tried in vain.

Puzzle.—Photo-sculpture is an ingenious use of photography to assist a sculptor in modelling statues from life. It resembles and reduced reproductions of M. Williford's work. It is the invention of a French artist, M. Williford. The subject stands in the centre of a circular chamber, and is simultaneously photographed by at least twenty-four cameras, arranged at equal distances around the chamber. The twenty-four photographs are arranged side by side on a frame capable of being revolved. When the sculpture is complete, the model where the clay model is situated on the top of the outline, being turned round, on a screen in front of the camera of photograph No. 1, on a screen in front of the camera of photograph No. 2, and so on, until the clay is in its first position by means of an instrument consisting of a screw and a handle. The model is then turned round one-hundred-fifty degrees, and the outline of photograph No. 2 is taken advantage of. Thus the modeller works his way, in twenty-four changes, around the figure of the likeness or fac-simile, or the reduced figure of the original, is complete. The method was also applied to the taking of medallions, &c., but, notwithstanding its ingenuity, never came much into use.

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